Guitar MAGAZINE

JUNE 2021
ISSUE 393
£6.25

THE ART OF AGEING

ARE GIBSON'S MURPHY LAB LES PAULS AS GOOD AS IT GETS?

EXCLUSIVE

PETE TOWNSHEND
NEW INTERVIEW & GUITAR LESSON

ON HENDRIX, CLAPTON AND THE WHO SELL OUT

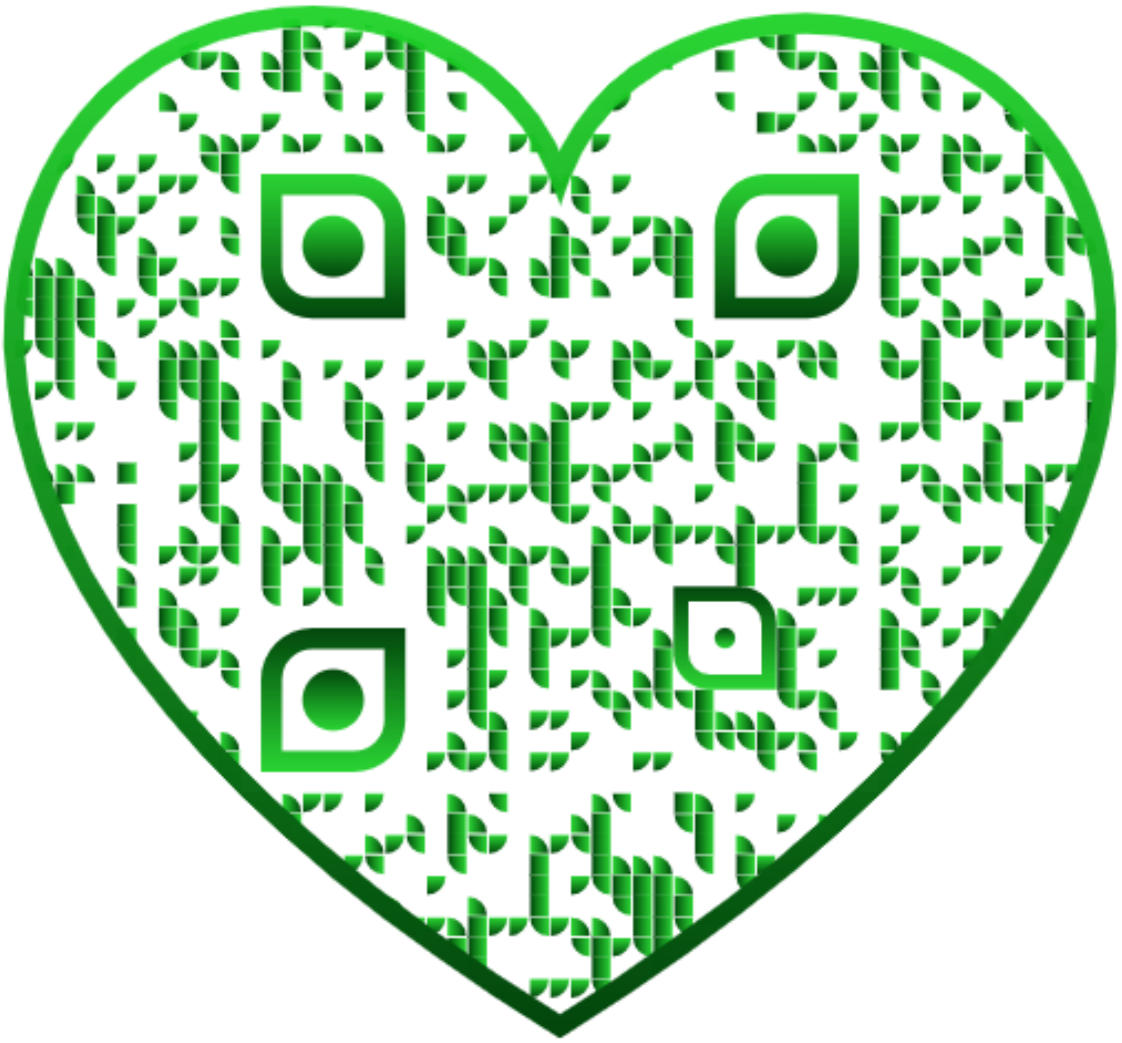
+

NEW GEAR FROM FENDER, GRETSCH, GUILD & JHS PEDALS

REBUILDING CHRIS BUCK'S CLAPTON STRAT

WIN

AN ASTON ELEMENT MICROPHONE WORTH £159



THE SONIC SHAPE-SHIFTER

© 2021 Fender Musical Instruments Corporation. FENDER, FENDER in fanciful script, JAZZMASTER and the distinctive headstock commonly found on Fender guitars and basses are trademarks of FMIC. All rights reserved.

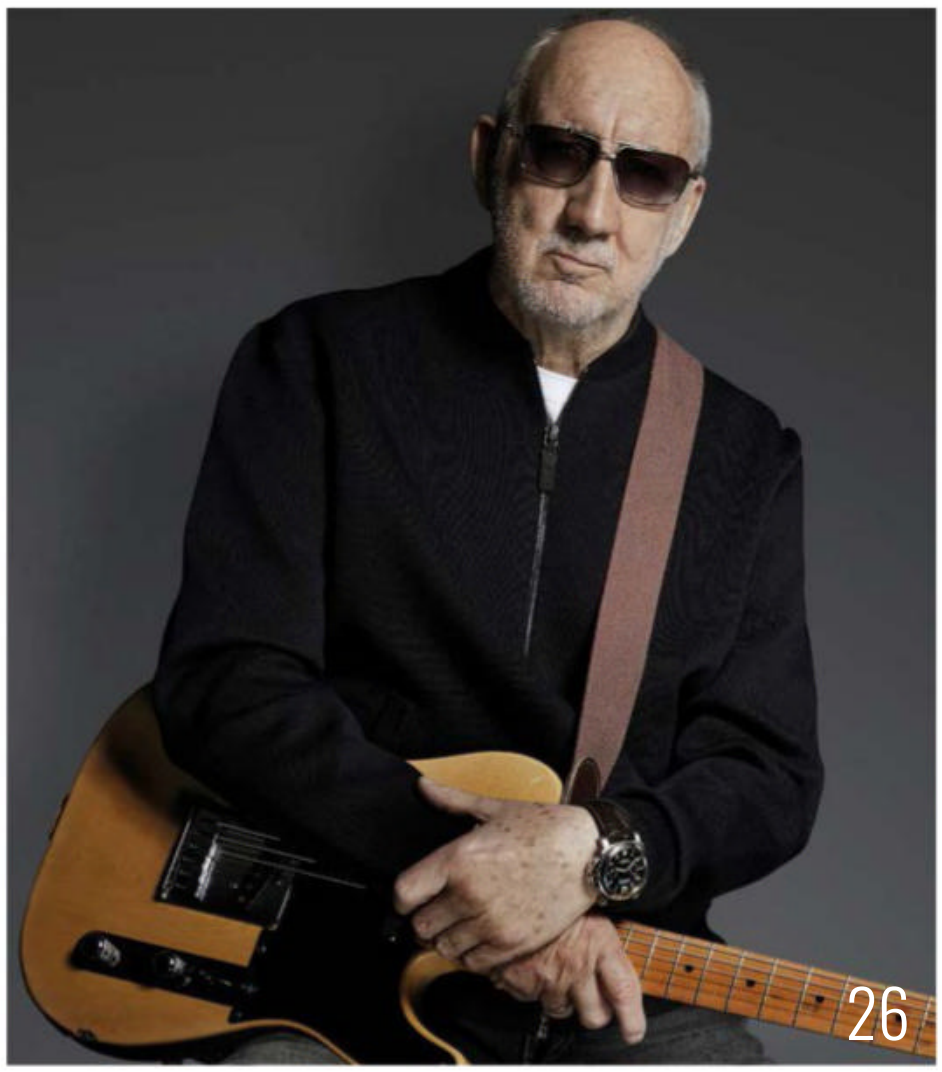
AMERICAN ACOUSTASONIC® JAZZMASTER®

An otherworldly guitar that combines iconic acoustic voicings and big electric tones with one powerful Blend Knob. Unlock an impossible range of sounds – no matter how you spin it.

CRAFTED IN CORONA, CALIFORNIA

The AMERICAN ACOUSTASONIC JAZZMASTER shown in Ocean Turquoise. Iconic acoustic voicings. Big electric tones. One powerful Blend Knob.

CONTENTS


26

92

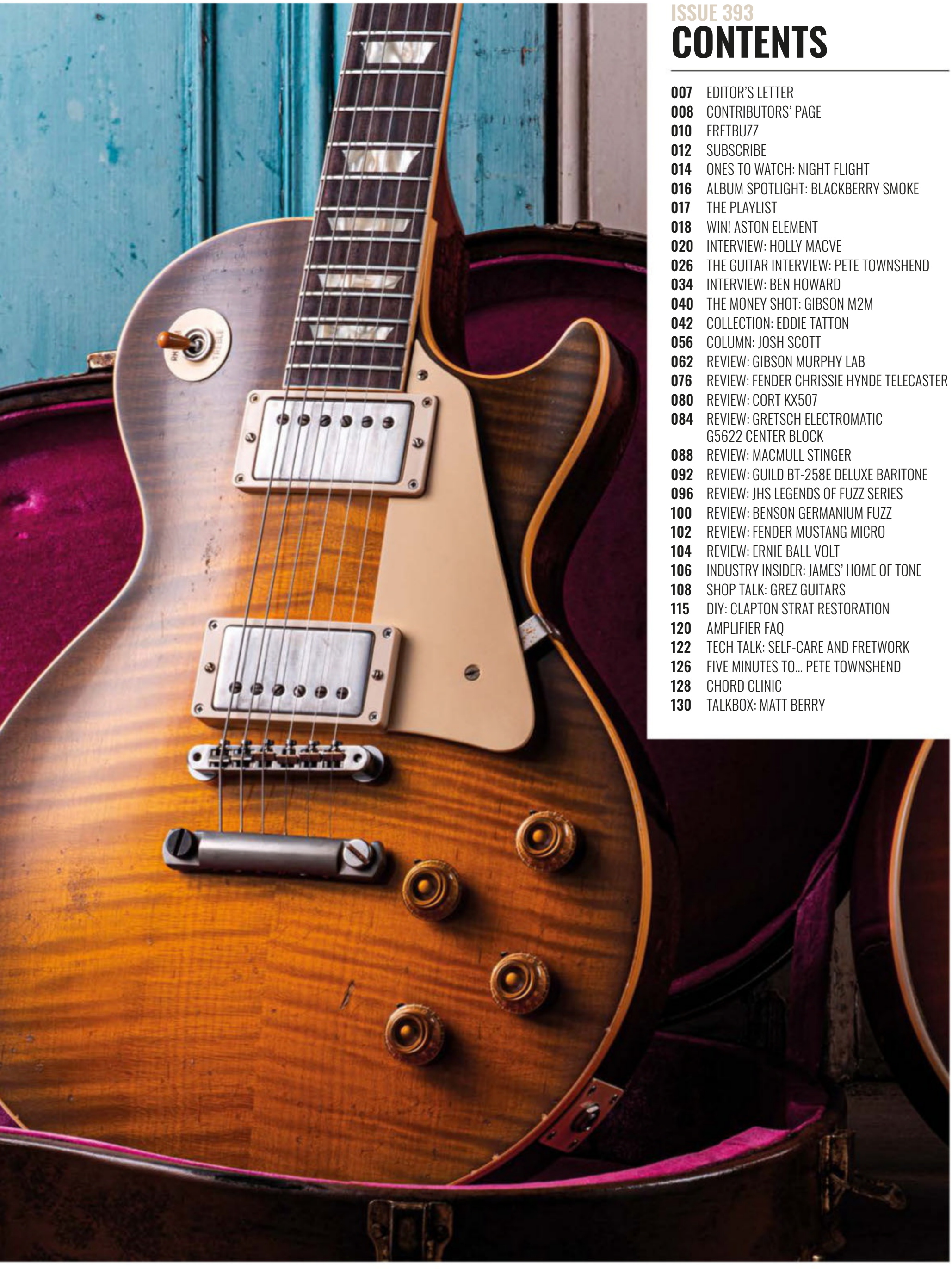
62

84

20

100

88



ISSUE 393

CONTENTS

007 EDITOR'S LETTER
008 CONTRIBUTORS' PAGE
010 FRETBUZZ
012 SUBSCRIBE
014 ONES TO WATCH: NIGHT FLIGHT
016 ALBUM SPOTLIGHT: BLACKBERRY SMOKE
017 THE PLAYLIST
018 WIN! ASTON ELEMENT
020 INTERVIEW: HOLLY MACVE
026 THE GUITAR INTERVIEW: PETE TOWNSHEND
034 INTERVIEW: BEN HOWARD
040 THE MONEY SHOT: GIBSON M2M
042 COLLECTION: EDDIE TATTON
056 COLUMN: JOSH SCOTT
062 REVIEW: GIBSON MURPHY LAB
076 REVIEW: FENDER CHRISSIE HYNDE TELECASTER
080 REVIEW: CORT KX507
084 REVIEW: GRETSCH ELECTROMATIC G5622 CENTER BLOCK
088 REVIEW: MACMULL STINGER
092 REVIEW: GUILD BT-258E DELUXE BARITONE
096 REVIEW: JHS LEGENDS OF FUZZ SERIES
100 REVIEW: BENSON GERMANIUM FUZZ
102 REVIEW: FENDER MUSTANG MICRO
104 REVIEW: ERNIE BALL VOLT
106 INDUSTRY INSIDER: JAMES' HOME OF TONE
108 SHOP TALK: GREZ GUITARS
115 DIY: CLAPTON STRAT RESTORATION
120 AMPLIFIER FAQ
122 TECH TALK: SELF-CARE AND FRETWORK
126 FIVE MINUTES TO... PETE TOWNSHEND
128 CHORD CLINIC
130 TALKBOX: MATT BERRY

EASTMAN

INTRODUCING

ROMEO LA

Feel wanted.

COMING SUMMER 2021

eastmanguitars.com

Guitar MAGAZINE

BandLab UK Limited
Unit 7, Riverside Court,
Lower Bristol Road,
Bath BA2 3DZ

EDITORIAL

CHIEF EDITOR Chris Vinnicombe
MANAGING EDITOR Josh Gardner
ART EDITOR Philip Millard
PRODUCTION EDITOR Sean McGeady
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Sam Roberts
INSTRUMENT PHOTOGRAPHY Eleanor Jane
CONTRIBUTORS Michael James Adams, Huw Baines, Darran Charles, Chris Fantana, Rod Fogg, Leigh Fuge, Dave Hunter, Huw Price, Richard Purvis, Josh Scott, Jeff Slate, Michael Watts
HAVE A STORY? Email us at editors@guitar.com

SALES

ASSOCIATE MANAGER, COMMERCIAL AND PARTNERSHIPS Joe Supple
joe.supple@guitar.com

PRODUCTION & OPERATIONS

PUBLISHING PRODUCTION MANAGER Craig Broadbridge
PRINT William Gibbons & Sons Ltd
DISTRIBUTED BY Marketforce (UK) Ltd
5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU

BANDLAB TECHNOLOGIES

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Meng Ru Kuok
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER Ivan Chen
UK COUNTRY DIRECTOR & HEAD OF STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS (EMEA) Holly Bishop
AVP, WEB TECHNOLOGIES Laurent Le Graverend
AVP, GROUP & BRAND STRATEGY Krystle Hall
ART DIRECTOR Simon Freeborough
MANAGER, CONTENT STRATEGY Iliyas Ong
ASSOCIATE MANAGER, CONTENT STRATEGY Terence Stanley
STAFF WRITERS Cillian Breathnach, Daniel Seah
ASSOCIATE, CONTENT PRODUCTION Billy Chua

SUBSCRIPTIONS & BACK ISSUES

guitar.com/subscribe
Tel +44 (0) 1371 851 882
Calls cost 7p per minute plus your phone company's access charge

BANDLAB TECHNOLOGIES

All content copyright BandLab UK Limited 2021, all rights reserved. While we make every effort to ensure that the factual content of *Guitar Magazine* is correct, we cannot take any responsibility nor be held accountable for any factual errors printed. Please make every effort to check quoted prices and product specifications with manufacturers prior to purchase. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or resold without the prior consent of BandLab UK Limited. *Guitar Magazine* recognises all copyrights contained within this issue. Where possible, we acknowledge the copyright.

EDITOR'S LETTER

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION?

It's no exaggeration to say that this issue of *Guitar Magazine* is feature-packed, and we've rolled out the big guns in the shape of Gibson's Murphy Lab Les Pauls and the man with perhaps the greatest right arm in the history of rock 'n' roll guitar playing: Pete Townshend. Read our exclusive new interview with The Who's incendiary guitar icon on p26, as he holds court on Clapton, Hendrix and the new Super Deluxe Edition of the band's landmark 1967 album *The Who Sell Out*.

Though Townshend often took guitar-distressing to visceral extremes, more subtly induced wear and tear has been applied to the aforementioned Murphy Lab Les Pauls that we put to the test from p62 onwards. Somehow, despite the fact that Fender's first Relic finishes were unveiled in 1995 and Gibson has been artificially ageing guitars for more than two decades, there's still no topic in the world of guitar that's quite as combustible as factory ageing.

I make no apologies for being in the pro-relic camp – I've owned several guitars with aged finishes in the past and still do, alongside genuine vintage examples. For me, it's a feel thing – I simply find it easier to bond with guitars that have a played-in, comfortable-shoes feel. Don't like it? Distressed finishes are almost always optional, and nobody is breaking into your house in the night with the intention of relic'ing your guitars without your permission.

Where do you stand? Write in to editors@guitar.com and show us your DIY relics or evangelise about the joys of a box-fresh gloss finish. But please keep an open mind and be nice! If we all agreed with each other all the time, the world would be a very boring place.

Chris Vinnicombe
Chief Editor, Guitar.com & Guitar Magazine
chris@guitar.com

DON'T MISS OUT!

Visit us online for the latest on gear, artists, technique and the guitar industry
Guitar.com | facebook.com/guitar | youtube.com/theguitarmagazine
instagram.com/guitar | twitter.com/guitar

Guitar CONTRIBUTORS

As this month's cover feature lifts the lid on the astounding next-generation ageing going on at Gibson's Murphy Lab, here we ask our contributors and team members to weigh in on the factory-aged phenomenon

HUW BAINES

DAMAGE PLANNER

As a freelance journalist, Huw has written for *The Guardian*, *Vice* and *Clash Magazine*. As a musician, he has written a handful of three-chord punk songs on a glitter-red mid-1990s Telecaster that wears the scars of shows, house moves and a tumble down a flight of stairs. As a result, Huw reckons ageing should come naturally. "Earning your wear and tear can feel good," he says, "like a potted history of your time with a guitar." For this issue, Huw interviewed Ben Howard about his new LP, *Collections From The Whiteout*. Flip to p34 for more.

LEIGH FUGE

CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

With more than 15 years of experience on the stage and in the studio, Leigh is an obsessed player and tutor who these days spends most of his time shooting videos for his YouTube channel. In this issue, he readies his windmill arm and breaks down the rhythm playing of icon Pete Townshend. Go to p126 for a lesson in how to get loud. As for factory-aged guitars, Leigh is all for them. "I'm a fan of the relic look if it's done tastefully," he says. "But what I really love is the played-in feel. I like the feel of a guitar that has been around the block a few times."

JOSH GARDNER

DESIGNATED DRIVER

Managing editor Josh's past 12 years in guitar journalism have seen him develop a keen interest in the intersection of gadgets and guitar, which made him the perfect candidate to check out Fender's impressive new Mustang Micro amp. Read his review on p102. Josh is an old hand at the artificial ageing game – back in 2004 he attempted to 'relic' a Squier Strat by dragging its body from the back of a car as a friend drove down a residential street, and then accidentally running it over for good measure. It was not a resounding success.

SAM ROBERTS

BLEMISH EXHIBITIONIST

Associate editor Sam began his playing career with a starter-pack Aria S-Type but these days plays a Fender Jaguar. He met James Gascoigne of James' Home Of Tone for this issue's Industry Insider feature, found on p106. "James's encouragement of boundary-pushing companies is second to none," says Sam. "He also knows how to make a mini Jazzmaster super-desirable and versatile." When it comes to factory ageing, Sam believes authenticity is key. "It's not for me, Clive," he says. "Gig your guitars and earn those battle scars."

JEFF SLATE

REAL-LIFE ROAD WARRIOR

A NYC-based songwriter and journalist, Jeff's work can be found in *The New Yorker*, *Esquire* and *Rolling Stone*. For this issue, we had him sit down with an old friend. "I've known Pete Townshend for nearly 30 years," says Jeff. "As irascible as he can be, there's one thing I know for certain: the man loves talking guitars." We can attest to that. Flick to p26 and you will too. Jeff is unequivocal about being anti-ageing. "No way. While the look of a guitar is certainly what drew most of us to play in the first place, there's nothing that can replace real-life road wear."

EMMA WILKES

CANNY SHOPPER

University student Emma has already been published in *Stereoboard*, *The Forty-Five* and *The Telegraph*, and has interviewed the likes of Nova Twins and NOFX. Her most recent feature for *Guitar.com* is an interview with Shawn Mendes' guitarist Zubin Thakkar. "He nerded out over his pedals," she says, "and we had a great discussion about what makes a good setlist." Emma has an entirely logical qualm with factory ageing. "I don't understand paying more for guitars that don't look as good as brand-new ones. You will acquire scratches anyway – for free!"

The Nylon String Guitar Designed Specifically for Steel String Players

Fusion 5 Jet

Expand Your Playing

Córdoba

cordobaguitars.com

#CordobaFusion5

FRETBUZZ

Your letters and observations on the world of guitar

Join the conversation Email us at editors@guitar.com

With the ongoing pandemic condemning us to yet more months stuck at home with nothing but free time on our hands, it's no surprise that many of you have turned once again to modding and guitar-building to keep yourselves entertained…

ACOUSTASONIC HIGHWAYS

Just before lockdown started last year, two things happened that peed me off: a good friend of mine bought a new Fender Jazzmaster; and Fender released the Acoustasonic Stratocaster!

I couldn't afford to buy either of these things (hence why I was peed off!), so I thought I'd use my free time to make my own Jazzmaster as a lockdown project instead. I bought an unfinished paddle neck kit and built it. I finished it to look like an Acoustasonic Strat, finishing the 'top' and leaving the rest bare wood. I even included a cheeky edit of the Fender headstock decal to reflect its new status as a 'TrevorJazzmaster' now known as TJ.

No sooner had I put the finishing touches on my 'hybrid' tribute to the Acoustasonic Strat than what do I find looking back at me from the front cover of *Guitar Magazine*? The Acoustasonic Jazzmaster! Have they been peeking at my designs!? I very much doubt it but it's a funny coincidence.

TREVOR JONES, VIA EMAIL

TWELVE DISCIPLE

I've just read your review of the Fender Acoustasonic Jazzmaster in the May 2021 issue and, yes, I'm impressed. I occasionally reimagine, remodel and recreate six-string guitars into 12 strings. I eventually sell them to make room for another project. I thought one particular project might be of interest to you: it's a Fender Acoustasonic Telecaster that I bought new when they came out.

I normally convert cheaper guitars but this time I thought I'd go for it and get a tad dearer on outlay. The neck is a Fender licensed Warmoth 12-string, custom-ordered mahogany with glow-in-the-dark inlays and side dots, and I fitted Fender branded tuners and added a 'Fender Acoustasonic XII' logo to the headstock. The body is untouched, apart from extra string slots on the bridge. Strings are fed through the existing six body holes in pairs. I've seen this done on some proprietary guitars, so I assumed it would work okay here and it does. Apart from the sound choice already available on the guitar, the 12-string addition gives it more interesting vibes. I have used it a few times on virtual open-mics and while I usually sell my 12-string conversions, I have no intention of letting this one go!

DARIO PASSARO, VIA EMAIL

It's always interesting to see your home builds and guitar projects but we've especially enjoyed seeing these instruments inspired by Fender's more modern designs, as it shows that contemporary guitar-making can be just as inspirational as the classics. Keep your lockdown builds coming to editors@guitar.com

GOOD TO GO

WHENEVER · WHEREVER

A passion for playing means that inspiration can strike anytime, anywhere. With Elixir® Strings you know that when you pick up your guitar it's going to sound great—time and time again. That's because our featherweight coating protects your strings from the elements, keeping corrosion away and allowing your tone to sound great for longer, in any environment.

Elixir® STRINGS

***Elixir* Strings. Performance-ready with long-lasting tone.**

GORE, *Together, improving life*, ELIXIR, NANOWEB, POLYWEB, OPTIWEB, GREAT TONE • LONG LIFE, "e" icon, and designs are trademarks of W. L. Gore & Associates. ©2009-2021 W. L. Gore & Associates, Inc.

Guitar MAGAZINE

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE UP TO 35%*

JUST £22.99 EVERY SIX MONTHS SAVING 35% OFF THE UK COVER PRICE

GET YOUR MONTHLY SUPPLY
OF NEW GEAR REVIEWS, IN-DEPTH FEATURES,
WORKSHOPS AND TUITION

SPREAD THE COST
BY CONVENIENT DIRECT DEBIT*

FREE UK DELIVERY

NOT IN THE UK?

DON'T WORRY – WE'VE GOT SPECIAL OFFERS FOR INTERNATIONAL READERS TOO

EUROPE €39.99 EVERY 6 MONTHS – SAVE 35%
AUSTRALIA $58.99 AUD EVERY 6 MONTHS – SAVE 35%
USA/CANADA $42.99 EVERY 6 MONTHS – SAVE 35%
REST OF THE WORLD £34.99 EVERY 6 MONTHS

ORDER ONLINE TODAY AT GUITAR.COM/SUBSCRIBE

ORDER NOW!

ONLINE
GUITAR.COM/SUBSCRIBE
USE CODE **GMPR2021**

PHONE
01371 851 882
USE CODE **GMPR2021**

CODE **GMPR2021**

OFFER ENDS **31 DECEMBER 2021**

*35% saving is available to UK customers paying by Direct Debit only. You will pay just £22.99 every 6 months, saving 35% off the UK cover price. All other savings are based on the local cover price for Europe, Australia and North America and are available when you pay by continuous card payment only. You will receive 12 issues of *Guitar Magazine* per year, starting with the next available issue.

Guitar MAGAZINE

JUNE 2021
ISSUE 393
£6.25

THE ART OF AGEING

ARE GIBSON'S MURPHY LAB LES PAULS AS GOOD AS IT GETS?

EXCLUSIVE

PETE TOWNSHEND NEW INTERVIEW & GUITAR LESSON

ON HENDRIX, CLAPTON AND THE WHO SELL OUT

+

NEW GEAR FROM FENDER, GRETSCH, GUILD & JHS PEDALS

REBUILDING CHRIS BUCK'S CLAPTON STRAT

WIN

AN ASTON ELEMENT MICROPHONE WORTH £159

ONES TO WATCH

NIGHT FLIGHT

WORDS SAM ROBERTS

Drawing on their love of Laurel Canyon-era records, Night Flight's lead songwriter Sam Holmes and guitarist Harry Phillips discuss their sympathetic approach to guitar and the influence of a 1960 Silvertone U1

What first inspired you to pick up a guitar?

Sam Holmes: "To be totally honest, at the beginning it was definitely to impress girls. I'm sure everyone says that but it is true! I stuck it out because I fell in love with writing songs. I remember in the early days I purposely didn't listen to any other music because I thought that would make my writing truly unique. Let's be thankful I didn't record any of those songs. From there, I discovered the likes of John Martyn, Nick Drake, Jeff Buckley and I was away."

Harry Phillips: "I can't remember what first inspired it but the inspiration to keep going with it came through the addictive properties that learning guitar has, then quickly starting a band at school became a priority, so getting better seemed crucial. Girls and wanting to blow people's minds at school shows with Guns N' Roses covers had something to do with it too. My parents still coveted guitar bands, which I'm thankful for; Pink Floyd, Thin Lizzy and Led Zeppelin were always there in the car for me to be in awe of."

Your guitar work combines the melodic intricacies of The Band and Kurt Vile with the driving nature of Laurel Canyon records. Can you tell us more about your influences?

HP: "I think the influences change with each song and whatever we're listening to at the time. We know what we don't like more assuredly than what we do like sometimes, and that helps steer the guitar playing away from anything too conventional or showy.

Night Flight, left to right: Dan Webb, drums; Sam Holmes, vocals/guitar; Oliver Halvorsen, bass/keys; Harry Phillips, guitar

We try to take a songwriter's approach to every instrument, so the guitar players that come up in conversation are Elliott Smith, George Harrison, Johnny Marr and Mike Campbell, and then if we can get in any world-music influences, Tinariwen or Boubacar Traoré. I think reaching for just a rough approximation of those styles can introduce something that sounds different and away from the usual boxes, even if the end result doesn't sound at all like them."

Tell us about your main guitar and pedal setup.

HP: "Pedals change weekly but for the past year or two, the less pedals the better. My go-to guitar is a '63 reissue ES-335, which is pretty special guitar, and I bought a 1960 Silvertone U1 in lockdown, which has been a bit of a game-changer, with flatwound strings. It has a lot of vibe. Small amps with a good natural break-up, or a Deluxe Reverb, never miss either."

What do you sound like and what's interesting about your approach to playing guitar?

SH: "I may be biased but I think Harry is one of the finest guitarists I've ever known. His gift for melody and knowing when to play within a song is truly special. He could give it all up and be an Instagram guitar whizz but he's chosen the noble path of tasteful guitarist in an indie band."

HP: "Melodic and sympathetic to Sam's brilliant songwriting, I hope! Nothing crazy. We like the sounds we hear on records from the '60s and early '70s, so we never stray too far from a bit of tremolo and reverb, with a healthy dose of slide playing. I'm not sure I can answer the second part but I think our own limitations have helped define the guitar sound. Nothing flash or fast because that's not something we can do well. Focusing on melody and finding a voice in the track is more important."

Your self-titled debut album was released in 2018. Why have you chosen to follow that up with EPs?

SH: "It's funny, we still don't feel like we've released a proper album yet. Our self-titled LP was an amalgamation of two previous EPs, so we're still all chomping at the bit to get into a studio and curate a full record top to bottom. It has a lot to do with timing as well. We've had a few line-up changes over the years and the band needed to find it's musical feet before embarking on an album. But I feel like we're absolutely there now."

How has your songwriting developed since then?

SH: "It's a lot more collaborative now. When we first came together, the band was very much an extension of my songwriting. But as time has gone on and our bond has grown stronger, everybody has felt more comfortable sharing their own ideas. What I love about our growing musical repertoire is that you can really follow that journey. I don't feel like we need to hide or keep taking down our old music and starting again for the sake of looking fresh in the music industry."

You've recently been working with engineer and producer James Mottershead (Slaves, Jake Bugg, The Magic Gang) on your work. What does he bring to the table?

SH: "James is an unrelenting machine. His work ethic is second to none and it's very inspiring to be in a studio with him. He's also been on this journey with us from the very beginning, so if anybody understands us, it's him."

HP: "He has a pretty remarkable and deep attention to detail on tones and sounds. He'll push to make sure every instrument has a really unique voice and his knowledge and understanding of how to make things stand out in a mix makes working with him an absolute joy."

What's your most memorable gig and when can we see you play next?

SH: "We were on a bill at Hyde Park with Paul Simon and James Taylor, which was pretty memorable for many reasons. Very excitingly, we've just announced a UK tour for this October. Like the rest of the musical world, we can't wait to get back out there!"

HP: "We also played a show in Krakow for Off Camera Film Festival, which was a really special experience for us. The sound was great, the crowd surpassed any of our expectations and being in a totally new place and experiencing that together made it pretty unforgettable."

What song stands out most on the new *Songs From Echo Zoo* EP?

SH: "I'm personally very proud of how *Canada* ended up. I started writing it during the first lockdown last year and it feels really cathartic to finally be able to share it. On the whole though, I'd have to say *Something Going On* is my favourite. It's a track that Harry wrote and it felt so exciting to work on, from its inception all the way to the recording studio."

HP: "I think *California* stands out to me, as it's a bit of a departure from our usual approach to songwriting and arrangement, I think it showcases an aspect of our arrangement and musicality that we have shied away from in the past."

Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?

SH: "Hopefully we'll be sitting on a solid catalogue of songs and records that we can be proud of. That or reaping the rewards of a one-hit wonder that splits up the band and has me embarking on an ill-advised solo career."

Night Flight's *Songs From Echo Zoo* is out now

© SEQUOIA ZIFF

THE PLAYLIST

ALBUM SPOTLIGHT

BLACKBERRY SMOKE
YOU HEAR GEORGIA

INTERVIEW SAM ROBERTS

Charlie Starr, frontman of Atlanta's Blackberry Smoke, selects his favourite guitar tracks from the band's brand-new album

Recorded at RCA Studio A in Nashville, Tennessee, Blackberry Smoke's seventh studio LP was produced by "extreme guitar nerd" and Grammy winner Dave Cobb. "We'd all been in lockdown for a few months before we started," says frontman Charlie Starr, "so everyone was chomping at the bit to get some work done." Smoke's first album with three guitar players was tracked in just five days. Here, Starr selects his guitar highlights.

YOU HEAR GEORGIA

"I co-wrote this one with my buddy Dave Lizmi [formerly of the Four Horsemen]. It wasn't entirely finished but Dave Cobb heard me messing around with it during a break one day and asked, 'What is that?' I said it wasn't finished yet and he said, 'Go finish it. We *have* to record it.' So I went back to the hotel and did just that. We laid it down the next day. No rehearsal, no game plan, just, 'It goes like this' and away we go. Moments like that are what keep us coming back as musicians. The riff is pretty nasty. I tried a couple of different guitar and amp configurations before deciding on a hollowbody and an extremely loud old Orange. The guitars and amps on it are a '65 Gibson ES-330 through a '70 Orange OR-120 and cab. The solo is a '58 Gibson TV model through a '57 Fender Champ."

HEY DELILAH

"I guess I will never stop writing songs about the scary bible stories we were told as kids in church. This is the newest one [laughs]! It's obviously the good ol' Samson and Delilah tale but, in this case, Delilah smokes Marlboros and probably has a cell phone with a couple of drug dealers on speed dial. I think it has a bit of a New Orleans feel to it. Brit Turner is the king of holding down a drum groove like this, no click necessary. A riff like this begs to be played on a Fender guitar so here's what was used: a '65 Fender Esquire through a '65 Fender Deluxe Reverb; the slide solo is a Gibson R8 Goldtop through '59 Fender Deluxe."

OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW

"This song is completely live. No overdubs! This could've been adorned with all manner of instruments but Cobb's opinion was that it would be most interesting if it were stark and naked – I agree completely. I think this is the second take we tried. To be able to do that in this day and age is a testament to Cobb's passion as a producer. On a side note, the third verse's lyrics are based on autobiographical experience. Fingerpicked guitar parts always seem to sound best on small-body guitars, so I used a '60 Martin 00-21. Benji [Shanks]'s slide guitar is a '63 Gibson SG through a '65 Princeton Reverb."

ALL RISE AGAIN

"This song is maybe my favourite riff on the album. Warren Haynes and I co-wrote it while we were locked in our houses going apeshit. The feel of the song portrays that. It's got this slow, sludgy groove but has an anxious attitude. The middle section is something that will probably turn into a free-for-all when we play it live. The main riff of the song is a good example of the idea that you never need as much gain as you think you do. Let the tone come through. We used a '65 Fender Esquire through a '62 Fender Bassman head and cab. Warren played a '59 Les Paul Standard but I'm not sure what amp, not that it matters; he's fucking Warren Haynes."

MORNINGSIDE

"This is a song that Nick Perri [formerly of Silvertide] and I co-wrote a while back. It has this big riff that turns into a wall of guitars and Hammond organ in the chorus. It's a pretty uplifting tune. Our friends, The Black Bettys, did a phenomenal job on the album and on this song in particular. Their beautiful harmonies that move with the chorus are just gorgeous. We ended up with these really nice room sounds on the guitars, very woody and airy. I hope George Harrison would like it! One other thing about this song that is cool to me is that Paul [Jackson], Benji and I all solo on it, so I dedicate it to any producer who has ever said, 'The solo is too long'. Benji plays a '58 Les Paul Custom through a '60 Fender Concert, Paul uses a '69 Gibson 335 through a Magnatone Tonemaster, and I use a '57 Les Paul Jr through a '57 Fender Champ." G

You Hear Georgia is out 28 May via 3 Legged Records/Thirty Tigers

This month's essential tracks for guitar lovers

DRY CLEANING
Her Hippo

Featured on debut full-length *New Long Leg* for 4AD, this track features daunting lead melodies underpinned by 12-string guitars, driving beneath vocalist Florence Shaw's witty spoken word style.

BEABADOOBEE
Last Day On Earth

Penned with labelmates The 1975, this is the 1990s revivalist's first release since her acclaimed debut LP *Fake It Flowers*. Written in response to the pandemic, the bubblegum grunge hooks come thick and fast.

ST VINCENT
The Melting Of The Sun

Annie Clark continues to tease her latest reinvention ahead of new album *Daddy's Home*. This retro tune features lap-steel, sitar and sultry, flanging guitars. Stay tuned for our cover interview in the next issue.

NIGHT FLIGHT
Something Going On

The subjects of this month's Ones To Watch, this single from Night Flight's forthcoming EP is reminiscent of Laurel Canyon records but bears the sheen of Adam Granduciel's early work in The War On Drugs.

BLACK MIDI
John L

The divisive band return with an inevitably combative single that sounds like Captain Beefheart and Primus all at once. The guitars, then, are as erratic as you'd expect, and they're also doubled up with eerie violins.

JULIAN LAGE
Boo's Blues

On his first outing for legendary label Blue Note, Lage once again makes a case for being the world's best living guitar player. His trademark bouncing melodies perfectly straddle the divide between blues and jazz.

RED FANG
Arrows

With this title track from their first album in five years, the Oregon natives have served up another slick slice of tongue-in-cheek stoner-rock. Its monstrous riff screams to be played at ear-bleeding volumes.

THE BLACK KEYS
Crawling Kingsnake

Dan Auerbach has always been at his best when he's channelling his blues heroes and this John Lee Hooker track, released ahead of new blues covers album *Delta Kream*, shows off some of his finest work in years.

GOJIRA
Into The Storm

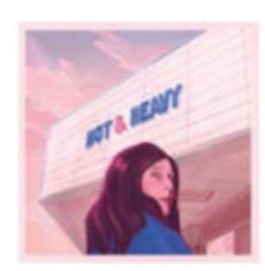
The third single from the enfants sauvages' forthcoming LP *Fortitude* features their tried-and-tested pummelling riffs and polyrhythms in abundance, as well as an anthemic stadium-ready chorus.

SCOTT MCKEON
Third Eye Witness

Blues guitarist McKeon has gone back to solo work following his stint working alongside Tom Jones. This exquisite single sports off-kilter melodies and an undeniably cool, fuzzed-out guitar solo.

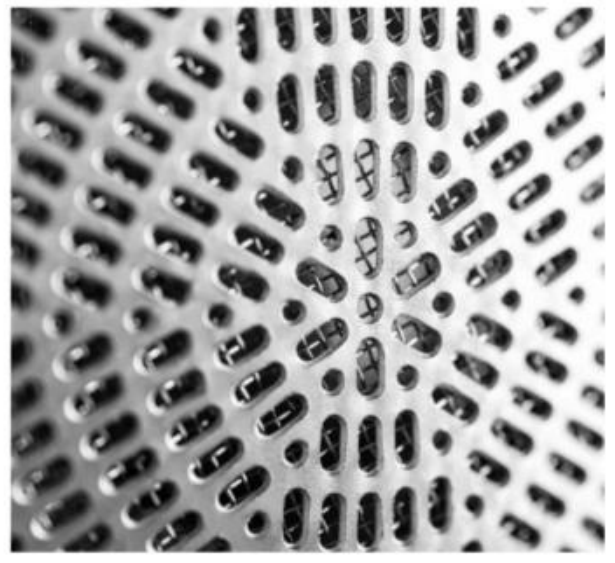
POND
Pink Lunettes

With its trap-inspired groove that'd be equally comfortable on stage at Reading as it would in the Haçienda, the psych-rock act that shares members with Tame Impala have delivered an early summer smash here.



LUCY DACUS
Hot & Heavy

Ringing with the emotional resonance we've come to expect from Dacus, this track, released ahead of her forthcoming album *Home Videos* LP, opens slowly before bowing into a shimmery, indie anthem.



WIN AN ASTON MICROPHONES ELEMENT

WORTH £160

For Aston's new Element microphone, the R&D process was opened up to the public for the first time, with the thoughts, ears and critique of more than 4,000 members of the music-making population undergoing numerous blind listening tests that resulted in what Aston calls the first-ever 'people's microphone'.

This smart-looking mic uses Aston's new capsule technology Ridyon, which aims to combine the best aspects of ribbon, dynamic and condenser mics in one fixed cardioid unit. Whether it's capturing the natural voice of a dreadnought or effortlessly achieving a ferocious lead recording with little adjustment, the Element's combination of price and performance is pretty much unbeatable.

To be in with a chance of winning one for yourself, simply head to our website and answer the question below. Good luck!

When was Aston Microphones founded?

A) 1995
B) 2015
C) 2005

Enter at guitar.com/competitions

Terms & Conditions

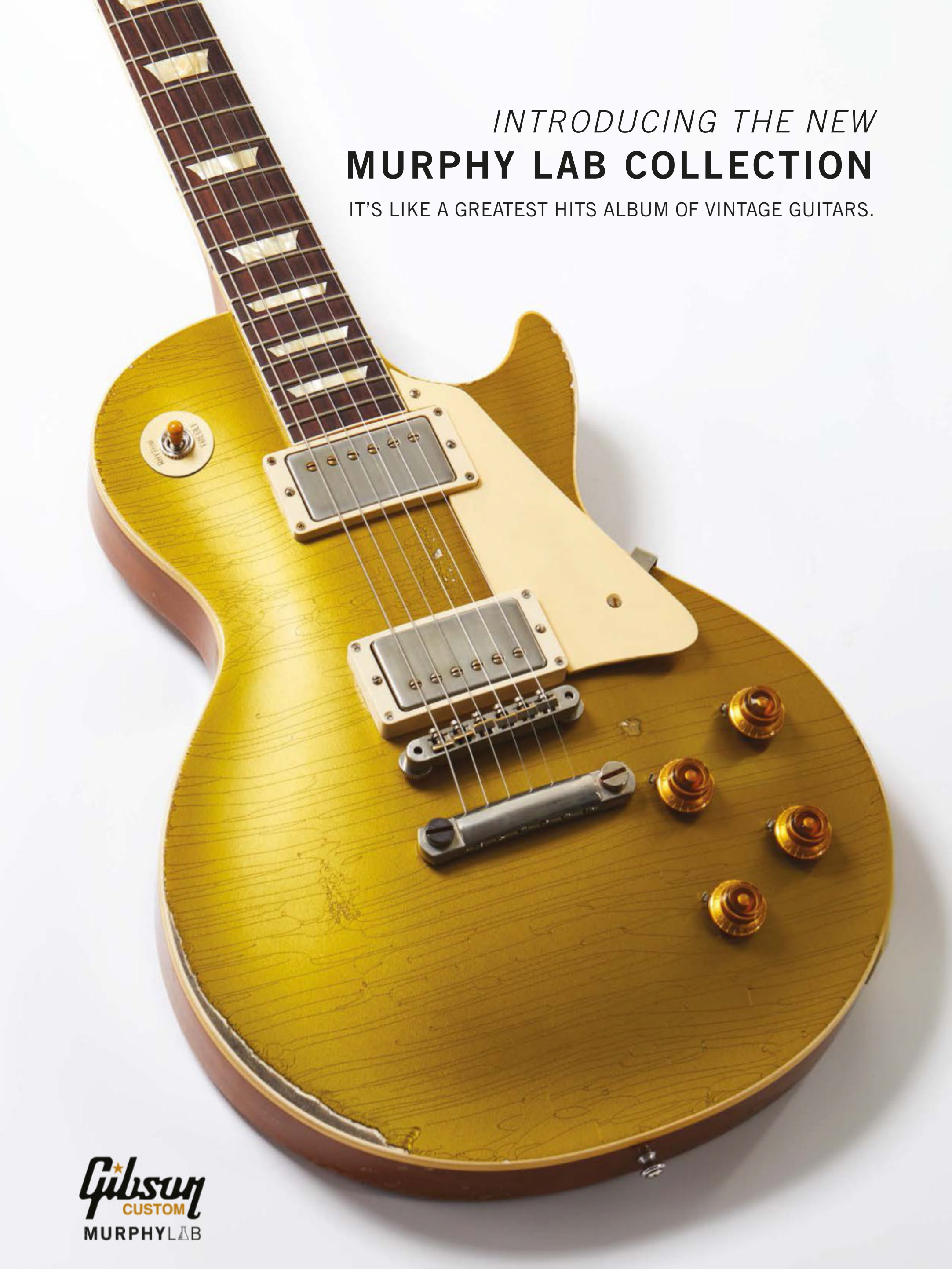
The closing date is 23:59 GMT, 4 June 2021.

The Company's decision is final. This competition is open to the United Kingdom residents only. This competition is open to 18 years old and above only. For full terms and conditions, please go to bnd.la/gm-ctos.

INTRODUCING THE NEW

MURPHY LAB COLLECTION

IT'S LIKE A GREATEST HITS ALBUM OF VINTAGE GUITARS.



Gibson CUSTOM MURPHY LAB

INTRODUCING...

HOLLY MACVE

As the Galway-born, Yorkshire-raised singer and guitarist unveils the more expansive sound of sophomore LP *Not The Girl*, she tells us about the hand-built guitar that feels like home and writing her third record before the second has been released

WORDS GARY WALKER

Four years ago, Holly Macve's debut album introduced a breathtaking talent with a soaring voice that evoked the talismanic figures of America's storied country music past. It was an assured opening release. Yet the Galway-born, Yorkshire-raised singer had grander plans for the follow-up to the sparse and dark-hued *Golden Eagle*. "I had this vision," she says, "where I wanted it to be bigger and more expansive, and have this dreamy quality."

Not The Girl is a fearless realisation of that vision. It's a lavishly woven album that witnesses an emerging star undertaking a voyage of self-discovery after clocking up thousands of miles on the road. In a different world to its predecessor sonically, it's the 25-year-old's coming-of-age record. It's fitting, therefore, that it was written and recorded using a guitar made by Macve's stepfather, and gifted to her as a 16th birthday present. Ever since that landmark occasion, Macve's hand-built Jones acoustic has accompanied her on her meteoric rise, travelling around the globe and featuring as the primary instrument on both of her albums. Other than a white Fender Jaguar she picked up in Brighton, it's pretty much the only guitar Macve plays.

"It's based on a 1950s Martin, somewhere between a parlour and a full-sized guitar, which is perfect for me," she says. "I take it everywhere. It's a really full-sounding guitar. It's just beautiful, and a little piece of home."

“WE HAD GUITARS ALL OVER OUR HOUSE. IT WAS A VERY NATURAL THING FOR ME TO GO TO AN INSTRUMENT, PICK IT UP AND PLAY”

Holly Macve performing with her hand-built Jones acoustic at Green Man Festival in 2017

Macve’s childhood home was filled with music. Her mother’s deep love of blues meant access to a record collection starring the likes of Big Bill Broonzy and Muddy Waters, while her stepfather’s flair for luthiery meant there was always a spare six-string to hand as a young Holly found her own musical path.

“We had guitars all over our house. I couldn’t really escape them,” she says. “There were half-made guitars lying around everywhere. It was a very natural thing for me to go to an instrument, pick it up and play it. I don’t remember the first time it happened but they were always around the house. I probably learnt my first proper tune when I was 10 or 11.”

Discovering Gillian Welch’s third record, *Time (The Revelator)*, proved a pivotal moment, and soon Macve was delving deep into the back catalogues of Joni Mitchell and Nick Drake as she developed her own playing style.

“At that age, I saw the guitar more as a tool for my songwriting,” she explains. “I was experimenting a lot with open tunings. For some reason, playing that way feels more comfortable for me than playing in standard tunings. I was never formally trained and it just feels easier to make nice sounds in open tunings.”

BRIGHTON ROCK

Moving south to Brighton at 18, it wasn’t long before Macve was discovered singing in a café by Simon Raymonde, founder of indie label Bella Union. Struck by her obvious talent, he released *Golden Eagle*, produced by Paul Gregory of Macve’s new labelmates Lanterns On The Lake, when she was just 21 years old.

The album’s noir storytelling captured stirring evocations of heartbreak and redemption delivered with that devastatingly emotive voice, which drew comparisons to the likes of Tammy Wynette and Patsy Cline. Powerful, vulnerable and rich with vibrato, it stirred images of both the Appalachian slopes and the Mississippi Delta, and earned the album plenty of effusive reviews. Four years on, she’s proud of what that record achieved but determined to stride forwards with its successor.

“I’m really grateful for all the things it brought me,” she says. “It allowed me to travel around the world, explore and watch loads of music. I did a lot of support slots, which meant I was exposed to loads of music I wouldn’t have been otherwise. That was a really important part of the journey of this record.

My first album was very much just about the songs and the lyrics, and that's still the case when I'm writing on my acoustic. But I wanted to explore things sonically much more."

Resolving to return with a statement sophomore release meant taking her time, juggling a part-time job with extensive touring. Support slots for John Grant and Ryley Walker and a solo trip across the US were life-affirming episodes that informed the new album's broader horizons. "I really loved that experience," she says, "it was really, really special. I've got a romantic idea of America and getting to drive through the country was amazing. I was doing a lot of touring completely alone, and some of it was quite lonely. I was playing so many songs on my own that it started to feel like *Groundhog Day*."

STORM COMING

Back home in the UK, Macve joined Mercury Rev and Royal Northern Sinfonia for a handful of guest vocal performances that, she says, only furthered her interest in cinematic arrangements. "Hearing your voice among all those instruments is really cool. It made me want to explore a bigger sound."

As ideas for *Not The Girl* began to germinate, *Nancy And Lee*, the 1968 collaborative LP by Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood, became a clear reference point, alongside records by The Shangri-Las, PJ Harvey, Linda Ronstadt, John Cale and John Barry. Macve got behind the desk too, co-producing everything with her band member Max Kinghorn-Mills. That *Not The Girl* was mixed by Collin Dupuis, who worked on Lana Del Rey's *Ultraviolence*, is not insignificant.

"The writing wasn't really a struggle," says Macve. "I had quite a big vision in my head about how I wanted the songs to sound, the difficult part was getting them to the point where I felt that they sounded right. I didn't want to release them until they were. I feel that now, it has become what I wanted, what I had in my head."

From the sweeping self-empowerment of the album's opening track *Bird, Not The Girl* feels like an immersive dream. The following track – and the LP's standout single – *Eye Of The Storm* was inspired by Sylvia Plath and unfurls from a lonely piano opening to become a graceful orchestral ballad with only the subtlest of electric guitar adornments. Mid-album highlight *Daddy's Gone* is underpinned by a classic Motown drum pattern and driving piano stabs, and sees Macve exploring the emotions tied to the death of her biological father. Next, the slow-waltzing *Little Lonely Heart*'s stately strings conjure a majestic air as Macve laments, "I'm as bad as you want me to be". On the penultimate track, *Behind The Flowers*, the artist indulges a long-held interest in murder ballads, prompted by a dusty volume she picked up on tour in Denton, Texas. She tells us more about it.

"IT'S ALL ABOUT DEVELOPING MYSELF AND FINDING NEW SOUNDS. I DON'T WANT TO SHY AWAY FROM DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT"

"He's so amazing," says Macve. "I was researching a lot of pedal steel players and he really stuck out. He's got the most perfect way of playing. It's sort of like a voice in that way, really beautiful."

Perhaps most integral, though, were the contributions of Bill Ryder-Jones to a handful of tracks, the former Coral guitarist and acclaimed solo artist teasing sparing decorative flourishes from his Fender Jaguar. While his contributions largely flicker at the fringes, with Macve holding down the rhythm on her Jones, the Liverpudlian added a scorching slide solo to the sultry Mazzy Star-esque *You Can Do Better*, as well as atmospherics that are both ghostly and grunge in origin on *Sweet Marie*, which tips its Stetson, surprisingly, towards The Velvet Underground. It's clear how much Macve values Ryder-Jones' support.

"He's a really great slide player," says Macve. "He brought quite a lot of that dreamy cinematic sound to it. I started working with him for this album and he was important in the beginning part of the journey. He's got a very laidback feel. It's just dreamy."

The sum total of this deeper and more considered sonic palette, with its carefully selected cast of guest musicians, is a boldly expressive and, at its heart, hopeful statement. Is it the sound of an artist stepping up and discovering herself?

"Definitely," says Macve, about as emphatically as her shy whisper will allow. "That's exactly what I feel. It's a coming-of-age thing. I was very, very young when I wrote the first album,and this album was mainly written when I was in my early 20s, with that feeling of learning who I was. There's still a lot of uncertainty in songs like *Who Am I* but, on the whole, it's me feeling I'm learning about myself."

Admirably, having arrived at this ambitiously realised sound after four years of soul-searching, Macve is not planning to stand still. She has been able to channel the frustration of being unable to tour for more than a year into writing her third album and is confident it'll have a distinct identity of its own.

"I've nearly finished writing it, which I'm very excited about," she says. "It's all about developing myself and finding new sounds. I don't want to shy away from doing something different. The artists that I like the most are those that are brave in that way and want to explore new things, so I think it will be different. I'd love to not spend as long on this record. Hopefully I can release it maybe next year, possibly the year after. But we'll see."

"It's about a girl who kills her father after withstanding abuse her whole life," says Macve. "I find murder ballads fascinating and a lot of them were true stories, often about women – and that's the awful thing: the woman was pretty much always the victim."

Among the notable contributors to Macve's sophomore album are British musicians Fiona Brice, who supplies orchestral strings straight from Laurel Canyon, and Billy Bragg back-up CJ Hillman, whose yearning pedal steel sound cuts through several of these songs.

***Not The Girl* is out 14 May on Bella Union**

THE Guitar INTERVIEW

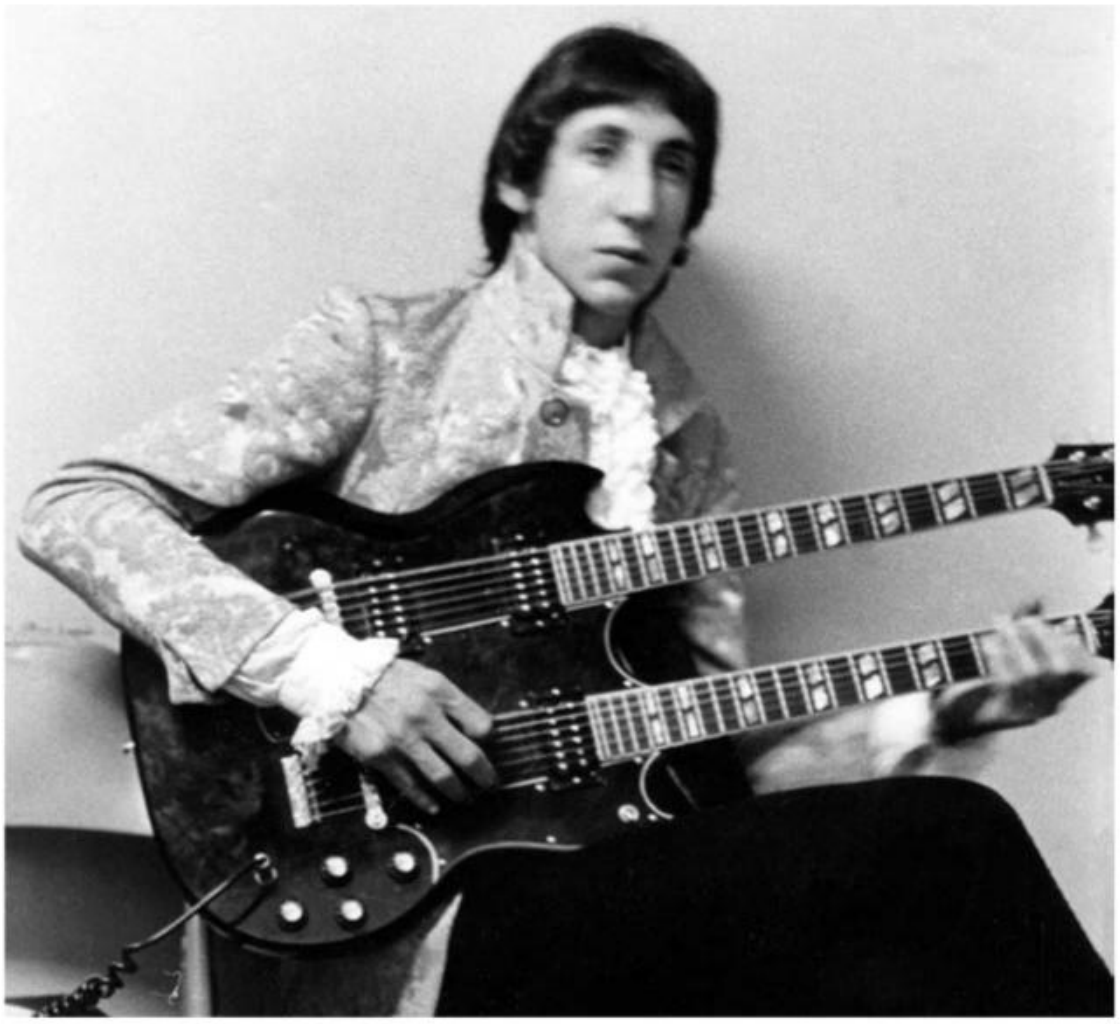
PETE TOWNSHEND

WORDS JEFF SLATE
PORTRAITS TOM WRIGHT

There are few guitarists who can claim to rival the influence and impact of Pete Townshend. But The Who's guitar-smasher and songwriter-in-chief remains as besotted with the instrument as ever. As he puts the finishing touches to a new boxset version of 1967's *The Who Sell Out*, we catch up with the 75-year-old to look back on his memories of that time, discover what he really thought of Cream and Jimi Hendrix, hear about his lockdown buys, and find out why guitars are like puppies…

"You've turned into a fucking stoner, that's what's happened." This writer has known Pete Townshend for nearly 30 years now, so when we explain that we've been whiling away the lockdown hours building and rebuilding guitars, including a scratch-built Robbie Robertson *Last Waltz*-style bronze Stratocaster, he can barely contain his mirth. But despite his guffaw at our quarantine projects, Townshend can relate. He may be one of the most influential guitarists of all time but, like many of us mere mortals, The Who's primary songwriter has found himself bitten by the guitar bug anew over the past year – and he's been shopping.

"I've been in the studio, designing studios, taking studios apart, fiddling with new gear, and buying and selling guitars," he tells us. "I didn't buy anything great. I bought an old Harmony three-pickup, and a Harmony 12-string – which is unplayable – because I'd sold mine at auction in Chicago to Eddie Vedder and always wanted it back.



“SOMETIMES CREAM SOUNDED SO EMPTY. I THOUGHT IT WOULD’VE BEEN MUCH BETTER IF THEY HAD A HAMMOND PLAYER”

“I bought some very old Rickenbackers, which are sometimes good and sometimes bad, and I bought a really nice Gibson 335. It looks like shit but it’s really good. I’ve used that on a couple of tracks.”

Proof then, that in these unique times, even rock gods find comfort in that most universal of guitar-related therapies: GAS.

Before the pandemic and lockdown, Townshend had been set to have a busy 2020. He’d toured the world in 2019, recorded and released *Who* – the first new studio album by the band since 2006’s *Endless Wire* – published a novel, *Age Of Anxiety*, and was set to hit the road again, for one of the longest treks of the band’s career.

“I was exhausted,” says Townshend, flatly, admitting that the lockdown was, at least at first, a relief of sorts. “I’ve been good, though, and as busy as I’ve wanted to be over the past year, which has been sometimes really busy and other times not so much. I’ve had a few ups and downs emotionally, just like everyone. But I’ve been good, and very happy not to be on tour. Now, after a year of it, though, I’m sort of missing people very much.”

OUT AND OUT

With in-person interviews off the table for the foreseeable future, Townshend is calling from his Richmond home to discuss the new Super Deluxe, greatly expanded edition of The Who’s third album, the remarkable and groundbreaking *The Who Sell Out*, from December 1967. This was an album born out of necessity but one that grew in stature almost immediately after its release.

Then-manager – and label boss – Chris Stamp had compiled a rag-tag bunch of recent studio recordings into a possible release and issued Townshend with an imminent deadline for an album that, in his mind, he hadn’t even really begun to write. But then the pair hit on an inspired idea: they’d riff on the then-current pirate radio craze and would cut jingles and station IDs to link the tracks together, creating a cohesive and, hopefully, coherent whole. It would also take some of the weight off Townshend as the band’s songwriting and creative driving force, as it would allow him to enlist his bandmates – especially bassist John Entwistle and drummer Keith Moon – to assist with creating those characterful jingles, which would benefit from multiple creative voices. Maybe even, he and Stamp thought, they could sell their unique jingles as advertising time to unsuspecting brands hoping to cash in on the bump in publicity they were sure to get.

© Tom Wright, Trinifold

Though selling the ad time never happened – in fact, several brands threatened to sue the band as a result – the jingles turned out to be an arresting way to stitch together a disparate bunch of tracks and created what could rightly be called the one of the very first actual concept albums.

"We didn't make very many albums," says Townshend. "This was one of the very good ones."

The new boxset – all 112 tracks and two seven-inch 45s of it – include the album proper in both mono and stereo, as well as the band's singles from the period, recordings that went unissued until 1974's *Odds & Sods* release, electric session tracks that show a band having a blast and hardly at the breaking point that history would have us believe, and a healthy helping of Townshend's home demos from the period.

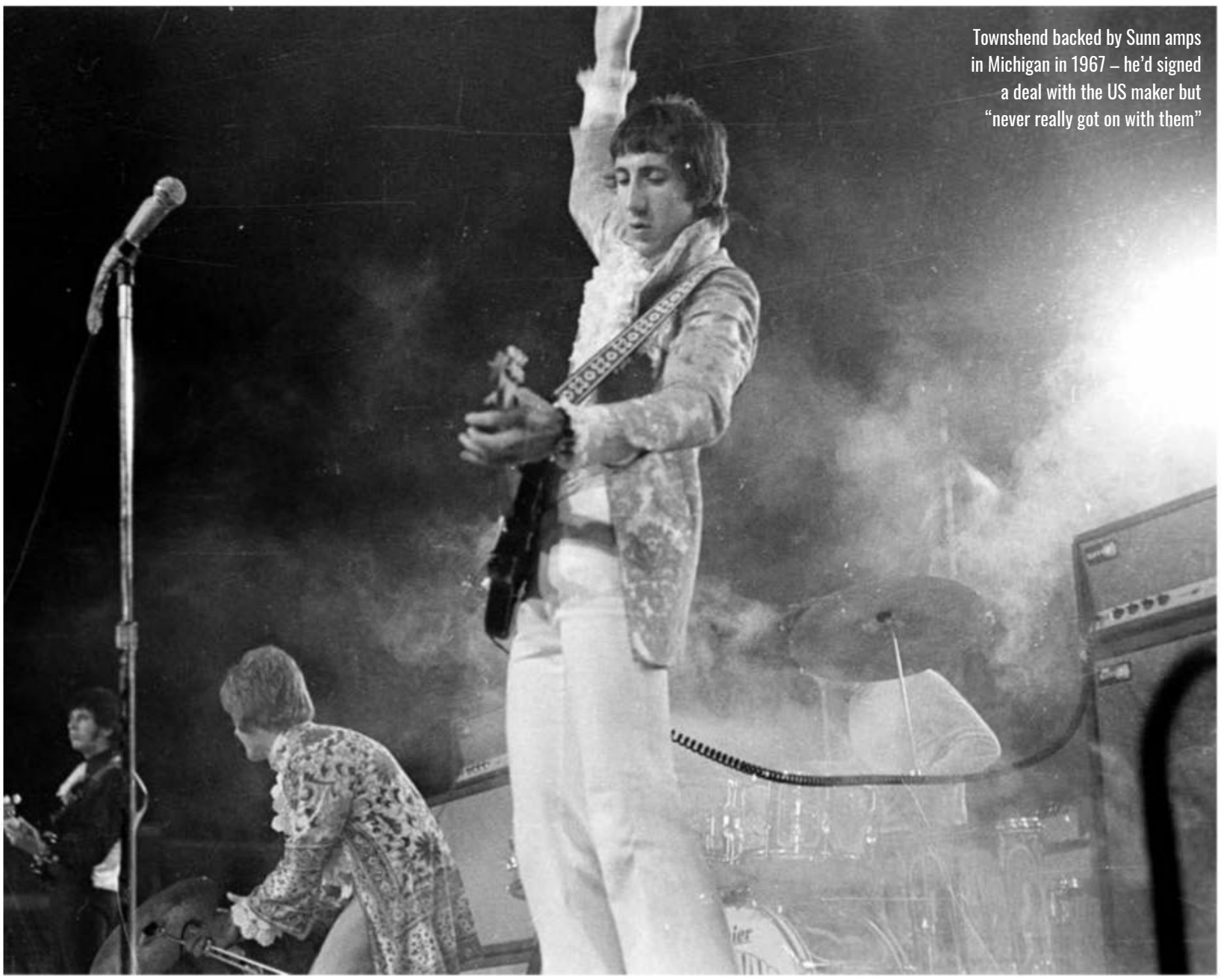
"It was an incredibly primitive process," he says of the recordings, which show Townshend in full flower, months before he would begin his next work, *Tommy*. "My home rig at the time was just a small Fender amp – a tiny little amp with a 10-inch speaker in it and three knobs. And I used to take my stage guitar home, whatever it was I was using at the time. So often, it would be a Stratocaster or an SG."

Like his friend and contemporary Jimmy Page, Pete Townshend has one of the keener memories in rock 'n' roll. He's quick to clarify when we mention the generally accepted wisdom that his set-up of the time typically included a Fender Stratocaster (which usually had mere seconds to live, owing to Townshend's embrace of the auto-destructive art ethos he learnt from Gustav Metzger at Ealing Art College) and the first-ever Marshall stack.

"I was using Stratocasters," says Townshend. "But it is a misconception that in that period I would've been using Marshall. I used Marshall for a while but then I hit on Sound City, which eventually became Hiwatt. I preferred those because they produce intense treble.

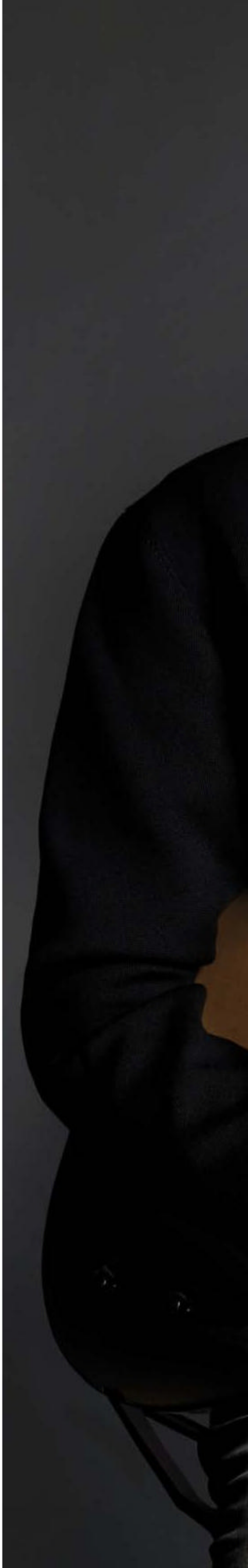
Townshend was fond of his Gibson EDS-1275 in 1967. Fans have theorised that the flared neck angle seen on the guitar later in the year (see above) was the result of the instrument being smashed and repaired

© Chris Morphet / Redferns / Getty Images



Townshend backed by Sunn amps in Michigan in 1967 – he'd signed a deal with the US maker but "never really got on with them"

© Wilson Lindsay / Michael Ochs Archives / Getty Images



And prior to that, even when I did use Marshall amps, I used to use Grand Prix reverb boxes to create distortion and treble. But on tour in that era, I was actually using Beatles-style Vox amps. They were tube amps but they were very poorly made. I used them right the way through – or halfway through – the Herman's Hermits tour of America, when we did a deal with an American guy from Sunn amps. I never really got on with them, so I used to kind of goof it a little bit, the sound they got. But I didn't care much about the sound at that time, anyway."

Townshend is also quick to correct any unfortunate misconceptions as to who the onstage driving force of the band was, despite The Who's drummer having a legendarily kinetic style.

"I hate to hear you say that I was riffing off Moony," he says. "Because I think that, partly because of his drumming style, I had to play a really, really solid, tightly syncopated but nonetheless tightly metronomic style of guitar playing. I was driving him rather than him driving me."

That requirement, as well as the fact that The Who were essentially a three-piece band, he says, drove his development as a guitar player. "There was no space, really, for fancy leads. As soon as I started playing single notes, everything seemed to fall apart."

To his mind though, this was a problem that didn't just plague The Who at the time. Townshend recalls seeing his friend Eric Clapton suffer similarly even when surrounded by supergroup bandmates Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker.

"I have to say, that was my experience listening to Cream," says Townshend. "It felt to me that sometimes it sounded so empty. I thought they would've been so much better if they had a Hammond player. I always loved Eric's playing but not always his sound. It always felt to me like it was a bit muffled, in the Marshall days. That's why I prefer Traffic and Blind Faith. I like the sound of that."

Some players, however, are effervescent enough that they transcend the limitations of gear and line-ups. It's perhaps unsurprising that another of Townshend's contemporaries, Jimi Hendrix, was, even in his mind, on another plane.

"Hendrix, although he played single lines, he was such an elegant, remarkable, decorative player, and just in a different league," says Townshend. "I'd like to say I was influenced by him but who in their right mind would back that up today – even some of the shredders of the modern world – and say they could cover what he does? And even if you can, you can't make it speak the way he did. And, of course,

the other thing, which is not shared often, is that unless you were there, you kind of missed 80 to 90 per cent of where the magic was. He was just such an extraordinary presence once he walked onto the stage with a guitar. It was kind of weird. It was almost like he was some kind of angelic, seismic, metaphysical force, who seemed to have light rays coming out of him, and then as soon as he walked offstage, it would switch off. He was an extraordinary presence. And that definitely made what he did as a player penetrate in a soulful way as well as musically. So those early recordings – they were great, of course – but I always felt they were missing something. Like they're missing one bite of magic."

RECORD BREAKER

There might not have been room for too much fancy lead playing in The Who but one thing they had in spades was *volume*. After all, they were once famously declared the world's loudest band by the *Guinness Book Of World Records*.

"The main thing about me trying to get a stage sound at that time and also, of course, a sound that I could develop in the studio, was that there were no real effects available," says Townshend, reflecting on his live sound of the era. "There were no stompboxes, really, that were any good. There were a few around that all just made the same fucking racket. But there was no sinuousness in the sound, no dynamic, no sense of change in the sound. Jimi used them effectively but Eric didn't. Eric's sound was Eric's sound – the way it started the evening, it would end the evening exactly the same way. It was the notes that mattered, not the sound. I was interested in sound. In huge, changing sound. So the thing about the SG plugged into the Sound City amps was that, with the P-90s flat out, it was this incredibly grungy but very, very solid sound. But when you turned the guitar down, instead of going soggy and soft, it got bright. You can hear it on the live recordings of The Who, where I stop the band and I start to noodle around. The sound is like an acoustic guitar."

Many of us have spent a lot of time noodling around ourselves over the past year, even if to much smaller audiences than we're used to. But aside from his work on *The Who Sell Out*, Townshend has been keeping himself busy working on new material.

"Along with all the archival work I've been doing, I've been working endlessly in the studio," he confesses.

"I'M STILL HAVING FUN WITH GUITARS. I'M STILL WORKING OUT TUNINGS AND INVENTING TUNINGS – I REALLY LOVE THAT"

Townshend letting his guitar take the strain at the Monterey Pop Festival, June 1967

"In there, I generally just end up using a stage guitar, especially when I'm working on playing heady sort of guitar on a recording. And because I've got quite a lot of studios spread around, I've got about 10 J-200s, the ones with the tune-o-matic bridges. With a few exceptions, it's still my go-to guitar for the studio, because I think the sound is not too full-bodied, so it's easy to record. I've got a really nice old Martin too. Simon Law, who was employed by Alan Rogan and is now my guitar tech, he's turned out to be a real diamond. He's a luthier as well, and rebuilt an old Martin 000-18, which I've been playing recently. It's just extraordinary, because two months before he worked on it, it was unplayable."

That's the second time that Rogan's name has come up in our conversation. He sadly passed away in 2019 and it's clear that this late, great tech to the stars is missed by those who worked with him.

"Alan was very close to Eric Clapton. He was close to Keith Richards. He'd worked Tom Petty and George Harrison, whom he was very close to," says Townshend, fondly, while making the point of how crucial Rogan was to the remarkable clientele he served. "I don't think he shaped my sound but I had never had a guitar tech before Alan came to work for me. I remember I used to give him a hard time, like, 'Listen, the guitar tech is supposed to tune the fucking guitars, not just put strings on them, man'. So Alan is probably one of the first guitar techs. I guess you can say I invented the guitar tech! I can remember going to see Crosby, Stills & Nash in a session and they were restringing their own guitars. In Steven Stills' case, he would only string some guitars, because there was this one Martin there that he said to me, 'I've never changed the strings on this guitar and I never will unless one breaks'. That was part of the sound of them. But Alan was fabulous. He was a great energy. He was funny. And he had the biggest black book of beautiful women that I've ever seen. I remember being shocked at some of the women that he would wheel into dressing rooms. Like, hold on a minute, who's the star here?! Me!"

TEXAS PRIDE

The prospect of live shows and life returning to normal again means that Townshend can start to think about the gear-related perks of getting back on the road with The Who…

"Well, every time I pass through Austin, Texas, I go to Collings to pick something up and I've never really regretted anything I've bought," he says with a laugh. "I've got 10 Collings of various sorts, including one with a very, very wide neck, which is great for fingerstyle and complex chords in the left hand. And I got some small bodies and some big bodies. What's interesting about Collings is they've got the ex-Martin craftsmen milling about and they've got the most fantastic supply of timber."

Warming again to the guitar-shopping theme, we recount an anecdote that Jackson Browne once shared about his love for scouring eBay for oddball vintage and Japanese instruments, and his love for 1980s Yamaha acoustics.

"I bought a Yamaha acoustic, brand new, when I had a place in Cornwall 20 years ago," says Townshend. "I went into a local guitar shop because I needed a guitar and I bought a Yamaha 12-string. It was a Japanese guitar – or possibly made in China – and it was just okay. And now I have it in my house and it is absolutely amazing because the wood has dried out."

Other guitars, he says, no matter their pedigree, don't always age so well, though they do have personalities of their own.

"I can remember the J-200 that I gave to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame," he says, "the one that I wrote *Pinball Wizard* and lots of other stuff on,

© Paul Ryan / Michael Ochs Archives / Getty Images

and that I made all the demos from that era on, and which I bought at Manny's. Before I sent it off, I opened the lid and it looked like the guitar was dead. All the varnish was peeling off. So I packed it off. It was probably perfectly okay and just needed a wet blanket put over it. But I think what's interesting is that guitars do change. They also need attention. I think you've got to keep your guitars out. It's not good for them to be stored away. Even if they're just sitting there on stands, they can get over-dry and warped. But at least they're there to be picked up. It's a bit like puppies. We've got five dogs and what I know is that when you go up and you say hello to one dog, the other three look at you as though they want to kill you. I think guitars are like that. You pick up the guitar and, 'Oh, this is great, I'm going to record with this!' And then all the other guitars are in the back of the room going, 'You bastard! You wait till you pick me up!'"

For Townshend, then, his love for his first and favourite instrument remains an ongoing affair.

"It's incredibly personal, working on guitars," he begins. "It's like how sometimes if you just tidy up your stuff, you'll be bursting with creativity. It's the same with instruments. You get them in order and they immediately inspire something. I'm still having fun with guitars. I'm still working out tunings and inventing tunings, and even re-entry tunings, where the strings are higher at the top than at the bottom. I really love that. So I'm still having fun with guitars."

As we wrap up our long conversation, Townshend becomes reflective about the past year, if with an eye toward a future that feels more than ever unknowable.

"You know, I'm not unbreakable," he says. "I've had some bad days and I've had some weird times. But I've gotten to spend so much time either in my studios or, what I feel is a key part of my creative process, creating studio rigs and set-ups – my Brian Eno side, if you like – and then composing too. For me, I was very, very happy for the first six months of the lockdown. I did three or four months in the studio writing, composing and working with a couple of other artists, because the lockdown wasn't all that extreme at first. Then, just before Christmas, we hit another very extreme lockdown. I think, then, I found it a bit strange, the idea that it was going to be yet another year, really, before the music business found its feet again. And here we are. We still don't know, do we?"

The Who Sell Out **Super Deluxe boxset is out now on UMC/Polydor**

WHITE COMPANY

English singer and guitarist Ben Howard on staying in his own head, keeping things interesting for everyone, and working with Aaron Dessener on new album *Collections From The Whiteout*

WORDS HUW BAINES

Collaboration is the heart and soul of most great records, whether that's a band toiling in a cheap rehearsal room, files appearing in Dropbox folders or a singer-songwriter batting ideas back and forth with a producer. Ben Howard has always chosen his creative allies carefully – they're people he knows and trusts, with the bulk of the weight usually resting on his shoulders. But things are different now. On his fourth album, *Collections From The Whiteout*, the other key voice in the room is a new one. It belongs to Aaron Dessner of The National.

On paper, this pairing reads more like a bout for the title than a tag-team outing, with the English folk-derived peculiarities of Howard's guitar playing and phrasing up against someone who has helped to make textural innovation and widescreen melancholia a serious currency in American music. But it was in fact a low-key, complementary match-up.

"We just had a good time making it," says Howard, while encased in a Zoom window, rollie between his fingers. "No fuss. No big story behind it. Our musical heritages are quite different but we found a familiar space in among it all, like the way we approach instruments and the way we approach pedals and sounds. Jon Low, the engineer, threaded that discourse and pulled us in from different areas we were orbiting. We're both ideas people. I wouldn't say I'm that proficient on any instrument but I like to chase a thread. I'm pretty relentless. I need someone to pull me in at points."

COLLAGE ADMISSION

Collections From The Whiteout, the follow-up to 2018's sprawling indie-psych exploration *Noonday Dream*, is brimming with ideas. It amps up almost every element of Howard's palette, delighting in complex layering and transposing the delicate nature of his melodies into a world of complex, unknowable sonics. The collage-like *Make Arrangements* is a good example: there is no riff to speak of and little in the way of pronounced shifts in pacing or tone, yet there are solid, meaningful hooks floating amid its shards of sound.

"My attraction to Aaron in the first place was because that is what he's doing at the moment – working on a lot of layered harmonies," says Howard. "*Make Arrangements* is a harmonised bass part that was very free-form, with beats and very few musical elements to it. But it's about realising that it's engaging enough to be a song. We started realising that is a theme, that relentless nature of a song."

There is a healthy side of form mirroring meaning here too. This is an album of its time, reflecting the preoccupations of its writer and also the environment in which its first seeds were planted. Howard has rolled his eyes over thousands of headlines in recent years, filing dispatches from a bitter, divided world governed by fools, as well as curios and the kind of stories that define strange but true: sailors who turned to subterfuge in the face of failure, fraudsters at home in any crowd, tragic flights ending on deserted land in the Puget Sound.

© Venla Shalin / Redferns / Getty Images

Recorded between New York, Paris and Devon, *Collections From The Whiteout* clocks in at just under an hour across its 14 tracks (16 if you count the vinyl edition's two extras). The album is almost Howard's attempt to declutter his brain. He finds ways to wind these tales around aspects of his life and to bind them to the LP's searching,loop-heavy compositions – and he seems to have accepted that that's his mission.

"It's impossible to truly get away from everything these days," he says. "But that's my remit. That's my payroll. That's my job, so to speak: to tinker around and stay in my own head. I think that this record was perhaps an acceptance of that. It certainly was a lot of useless information I seemed to have obtained, and I wanted to somehow sift through it into a cohesive set of songs. I realised that there's a deep crossover between every tiny little detail in everyone else's stories with my own experiences, and that you can thread a fairly cluttered path through it and come out at the end of it with a few songs."

FUNNY GUY

But the clutter is essentially the point of the exercise here. Howard is liable to get lost in a song, poring over each movement, driven by a desire to make unusual choices and to follow each idea through to some sort of a conclusion. Lyrically, the album taps into that too. It is an episodic, surrealistic exercise, like hiding an inappropriate guffaw behind clenched teeth. The album is at its best when these twin concerns clatter into melodies that offer a playful sense of pattern and circularity, knowingly doubling down on the narratives and jokes in a sea of delay and helter-skelter atmospherics.

"With a song, you've got so much you can play with," he says. "It's not just the lyrical content. It's not just instrumentation. It's form. It's little references and reference points. That's what makes it interesting. It's a free-for-all when you come to put these things down. I enjoy being able to have fun with that. I enjoy the duality and it not being a concrete thing."

© Venla Shalin / Redferns / Getty Images

Howard and his 1965 Fender Jazzmaster at Brixton's O2 Academy in 2019

Having racked up hundreds of shows across Europe under his own steam, the vibe quickly shifted. In place of club nights in Belgium, there were multi-night stands at Brixton Academy, arena dates in the US opening for Mumford and Sons and, of course, headline-grabbing Glastonbury sets.

Shortly after winning a brace of Brit awards – for British Breakthrough Act and British Male Solo Artist – Howard put out his second album *I Forget Where We Were*. Released in the autumn of 2014, it was a sharp left turn into wiry acoustic leads and restless songs that bled into one another across a mammoth running time of almost an hour. It was difficult, anxious and alienating. It was not the easy option.

Here was Howard treating his audience like engaged listeners, grown-ups. It began a process of reframing his live show as an often introspective, interrogation of his music. "It's got to be interesting for everyone.

"I END UP PLAYING A LOT OF RIGHT-HANDED GUITARS UPSIDE DOWN. I DON'T THINK IT'S VERY GOOD FOR MY PLAYING"

In a selfish way, it's got to be interesting for the artist as well," he says. "There have often been people disappointed at the catalogue we play live and, for me, we have to strike that balance together rather than it being a one-way conversation."

At this remove, it's clear that *Collections From The Whiteout* just doesn't get written by the man who decides to cash in on *Every Kingdom*'s recipe for success. "It was an important decision," Howard says today. "I got a hard time for it across the board. If anything, it made me more resolute in [believing] that there were more interesting things to do. I could not see me doing it any other way, so it was a bit of nonsense. I didn't understand what all the fuss was about. I don't think I've ever expected that [repeating yourself] off artists I like."

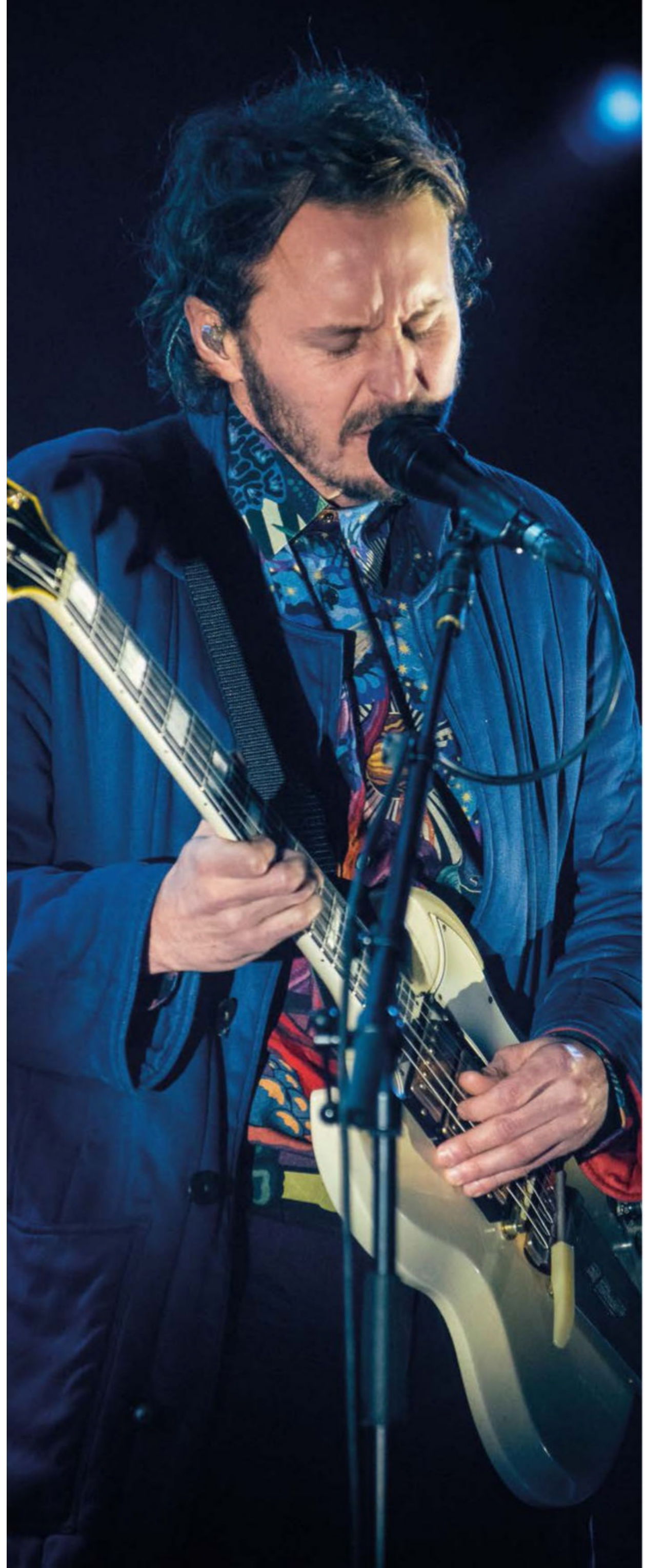
"The absurdity element was certainly something I wanted to include," adds Howard. "I'm a big Roald Dahl fan and a big fan of old English literature. To be honest, I was really disappointed that the record wasn't funnier. I'm always trying to be funny, and I think that's where the duality comes in – the crossover of story and self. I listen to a lot of artists who are a bit more tongue-in-cheek. I think, inevitably, you're almost trying to copy aspects of people or get across a sense of humour."

Howard started out a long way from this self-reflexive spot. As a kid, he moved from Middlesex to Totnes, Devon, and his emergence in 2011 with the smash-hit LP *Every Kingdom* very much played upon the surfer-dude persona that has lit thousands of gap-year beach bonfires over the years. Pairing the long-simmering influence of John Martyn with melodic smarts and a knack for low-key pop framing, the record capped off one of those years-long overnight success stories that we're always hearing about.

NO DEFAULTS

Seven years down the line, Howard is still tough to pin down. When asked about his approach to recording guitars, he's reluctant to attach his colours to any one instrument, or piece of equipment, or mode of working.

"I have no tried-and-tested," he says. "I have no default setting. I make it quite difficult for myself and I definitely make it difficult for other people. It was more coming in with a load of strange ideas and seeing whether any of them were workable. I'm always fucking with the guitar, and trying to get something else out of it. There's guitar through Moog. There's always a lot of delay. I play guitar quite rhythmically and I find it's often more important than melody.



There's a weird fusion of the two when they're in the right proportion. But, then, I came in with a couple of top lines as well. My setup was all over the place."

From the outside, *Collections from the Whiteout* suggests an approach that leans towards reshaping its guitars as elements within a wider firmament, manipulating them so as to remove the idea of a dominant force. But the opposite is true. Travelling to Dessner's backyard in New York – pre-COVID, and pre-Dessner decamping to the forest to make *Folklore* and *Evermore* with Taylor Swift – threw up practical issues that they factored into their work. Howard travelled light, with only a 1920s Martin parlor guitar for company.

"We were constantly trying to make guitars sound like guitars," says Howard. "The picking is the backbone of it but I'm always getting told off for trying to make weird noises. This process was trying to align it with something that was a bit more literate. It was nice to go back to the acoustics a lot more, and that was really an element of what guitars I could take because the customs are so strict. They always give you such a hard time, it's such a welcome committee to America. You get the third degree. All of that shit feeds into making a record."

© Matthew Baker / Getty Images

> "WE WERE CONSTANTLY TRYING TO MAKE GUITARS SOUND LIKE GUITARS. THE PICKING IS THE BACKBONE OF IT BUT I'M ALWAYS GETTING TOLD OFF FOR MAKING WEIRD NOISES"

The electric guitars also cover a lot of ground on *Collections From The Whiteout*. Its shifting priorities see Howard immediately following the Mark Knopfler-style leads of *What A Day* with the distorted skronk of the TV On The Radio-style *Crowhurst's Meme*. Howard's work, both live and in the studio, is largely completed here through the medium of Fender Jazzmaster.

"It's a '65, left-handed," he says. "I've been looking for a left-handed Silvertone or something but I end up finding a right-handed one and figuring out how to play that. I end up playing a lot of right-handed guitars upside down. I don't think it's very good for my playing but it meant that I deep-dived even more into the delay world. Now, I've tidied it up and organised my life a bit, and I'm trying to fingerpick more."

Howard freely admits that he's never really understood what his guitar playing is, and what his purpose is within the wider world of guitar, and this off-balance view of his work is stapled to *Collections From The Whiteout*. As time stretches away from 2011's *Every Kingdom*, he appears to be both retreating into himself and broadening his horizons, as though the musical answers he's after will be found both within and without.

"I don't approach writing in a set way," he says. "This was an opportunity to experiment with words and music together and see where those little fusion points work and where they don't. It's the same with harmony. There are a lot of harmonies on this record that shouldn't work but they did. It was work across the board in terms of vocals, musical arrangements, lyrics, fragments of poetry, obscure references, and I always struggle with the fact that I'm not succinct enough. I read something about Leonard Cohen years ago, that he was always trying to simplify things because he realised that made for a better song. I've always gone the other way because the weirder, the better, I find. We're obsessed with meaning these days. I've done a couple of interviews where, straight out of the gate, everything is, 'What does this mean? What does that mean?' I find the question marks the interesting part." G

***Collections From The Whiteout* is out now on Island Records**

OPPOSITE Switching to an SG at Brixton Academy

ABOVE Live at Cardiff's Motorpoint Arena in 2018

© Mike Lewis Photography / Redferns / Getty Images

RHYTHM
TREBLE

EYES ON THE PRIZE

Step right up for the big reveal as our Gibson Made 2 Measure competition winner is announced, and their prize unveiled

In January 2020, we paid a visit to Gibson's London showroom and hand-picked three tops for a public vote on the specifications of probably the finest competition prize we can recall seeing in any guitar magazine: a Gibson Custom Made 2 Measure Les Paul Standard worth more than £5,000. You entered in your thousands and voted for this flametop in Vintage Lemon Burst with '59 specs, a VOS finish and unpotted alnico III Custom Buckers. We'd hoped to collect the finished instrument at Summer NAMM 2020 and present the lucky winner with their amazing new guitar shortly thereafter but the small matter of a pandemic added greatly to the build time and made that prize-giving problematic.

We can now announce that the winner is Darren Winder from Lancashire in the UK, who has finally been united with his prize. On receiving it, an ecstatic Darren commented: "I opened the case and was just knocked out by the VOS finish, and the flame on the maple cap looks great. Picking it up out of its case for a closer look, it is faultless, and has a nice light weight. The neck feels so good and the finish is amazing."

There we have it. In the style of a 1970s television show, all that remains is for the rest of you to take a look at what you could have won. Thanks to our friends at Gibson in the UK and USA for making this happen in these challenging times – visit gibson.com to find out more about making your dream guitar a reality via the Made 2 Measure programme.

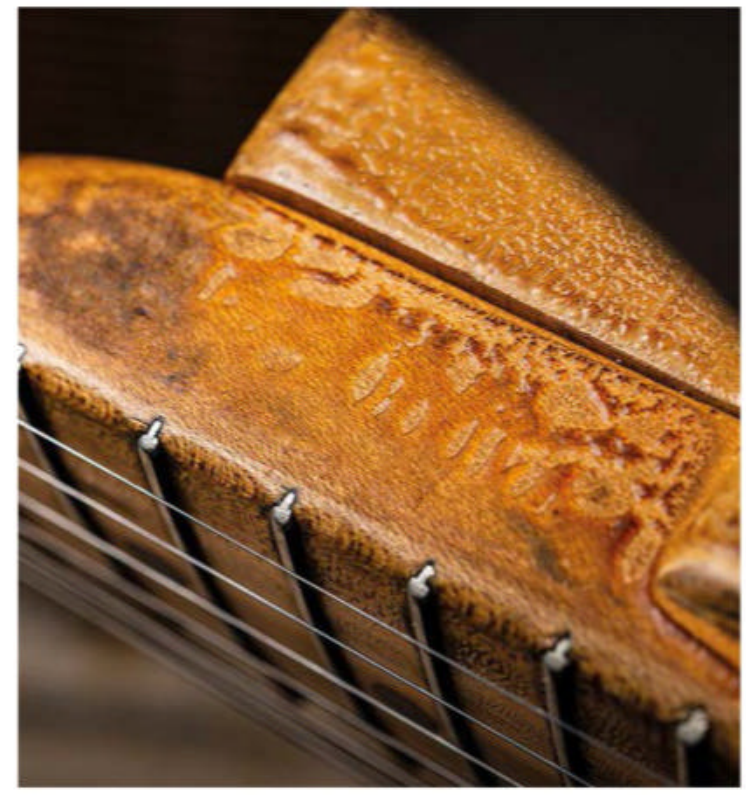
THEATRE ROYAL

WORDS CHRIS VINNICOMBE
PHOTOGRAPHY ELEANOR JANE

From international festivals to orchestra pits and sharing stages with blues legends, English guitarist Eddie Tatton's career in guitar has been more varied than most

Replete with macro details of the decades of wear, tear and grime that proves his instruments have been anything but museum pieces, Lincoln guitarist Eddie Tatton's Instagram account is a must-follow for fans of vintage guitars. During his decades-long career as a working musician, Tatton has played practically every gig you can imagine, from blues clubs and festival stages to orchestra pits in theatres, amassing along the way a guitar, amp and pedal collection every bit as enviable as his stellar playing abilities. Back in October 2020, we made the trip to the historic cathedral quarter that he calls home to meet the man behind the macro shots – and take a few pictures of our own.

"I started playing when I was 12," says Eddie when we ask him the inevitable question about his gateway drug into guitar addiction. "I think it was 1977 or '78, when everything on *Top Of The Tops* was incredible,



or so it seemed at the time, and everything had a guitar in it. The disco thing was happening but it was all guitar-centric as well. Nile Rodgers, Chic… incredible. I just thought, 'I've got to do this' and I just copied records. I was mad into Queen, Rainbow and all that, and after that Steely Dan and the jazz kind of thing. So it just went from there really."

After cutting his teeth on a Hondo II, Eddie moved on to a far superior instrument. "My parents were really supportive, my dad especially," he says. "We didn't have a lot of money in the household or anything but they bought me a Yamaha SG-1500 which, at the time, was just an amazing instrument. They're still great. Lovely guitars, well built. So I got stuck into that and just went mad, learning as much as I could. And there was no internet – you couldn't Google stuff or look it up on YouTube. I sat there with records, just putting records on and learning by ear. It took me ages to learn *Message In A Bottle*. Probably two weeks to learn it properly and play it. Then for the next two weeks that was all I played!"

Soon he was confident enough to play in bands. "I was about 14 years old when I started in my first band," Eddie recalls. "I was playing in school bands and stuff like that, everybody did. But back in the day, I used to go into music shops and you'd play and people would hear you and say, 'Do you want to join this band?' So you'd join a little covers band or something like that. Then someone else hears you play and they say, 'We've got a club band, doing working men's clubs and stuff'. Just all around Lincolnshire, really. Often you were learning stuff that you didn't really like but you were learning stuff that you needed to learn, so that was cool."

The vibrant live music scene of the era meant that there were no shortage of gigs for the teenage guitarist. "I had to lie about my age all the time," he says. "But it was great. Really good times.

Eddie's 1952 Blackguard started life as a Esquire but was soon returned to the factory to have a neck pickup and new pickguard fitted

Eddie's number one is this 1964 ES-335 that he's owned since 1988. Despite three decades of gigging and recording since, most of the wear and tear was present when he first bought it

You get the bug for it and join as many bands as you can, so I was in blues bands, a rock band, doing jazz stuff… I think I was in 14 bands at one point! My sister is older than me. She's a singer, and I used to go and watch her band doing the same sort of thing. She was out maybe four or five nights a week. In those days you could be a semi-professional musician and do okay, before the days of karaoke and sport in pubs."

WAX WORK

Fast-forward to the 1990s and Tatton was supporting the likes of Robben Ford, Junior Wells and Phillip Walker as part of melodic British blues group Out Of The Blue, and even backing Stax legends The Memphis Horns on UK and European tour dates. Major career highlights have also included collaborating live and in the studio with Mozez from acclaimed acid-jazz collective Zero 7, as well as a heady stint with Nightmares On Wax.

"Some time just after 2002, I think, we did some tours – Australia, around Europe and stuff," he remembers. "Nightmares On Wax is weird because it's well known here but we weren't number one or anything like that. But you go to somewhere like Australia and everyone's really into it, and the same in Europe and Japan. We'd do a festival in Australia and Oasis would be on the main stage and we'd be headlining the dance stage, that kind of thing. Big, big stages. We did one mad gig in Portugal where we were on at two in the morning or something like that. It was Björk, then Moby, then us. And it's weird because you do these things and then it's like, 'Okay, I'm back in Lincoln now!' and I've got a gig in a pub or something! [laughs]"

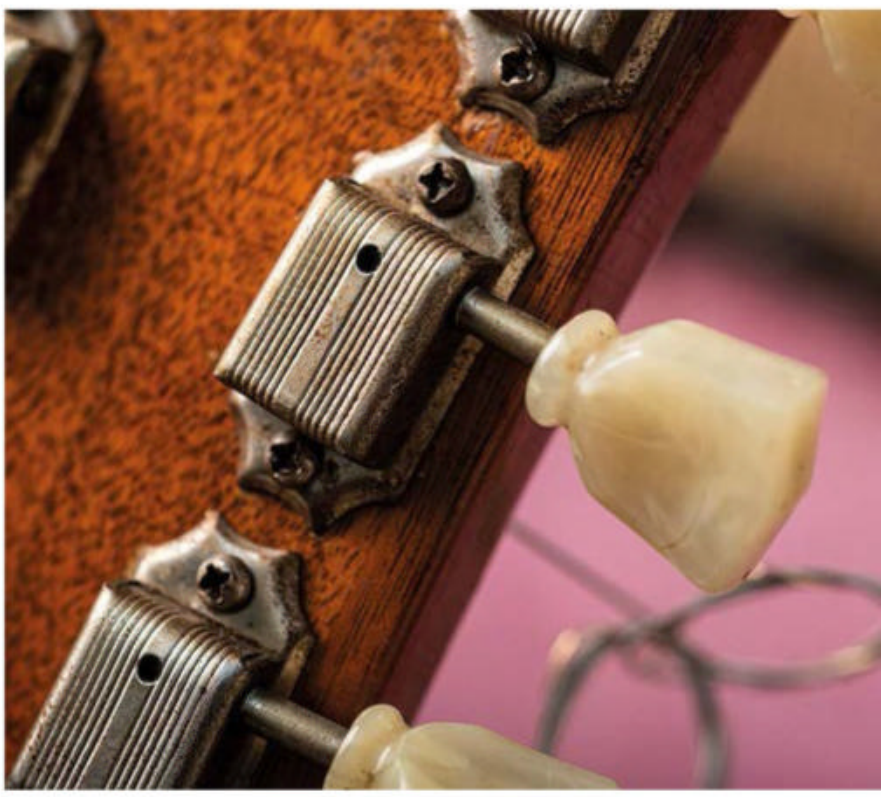
In recent years, in what he jokingly refers to as a "bizarre life choice", Eddie has spent much of his time travelling around the UK playing as part of the pit orchestra in musical theatre shows such as *High School Musical*, *Hairspray*, *The Bodyguard*, *Sister Act*, *Grease* and, most recently, *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. The pandemic, however, has put those gigs on hold.

"The discipline side is the hardest thing," he replies when asked about the challenges of playing guitar in that environment. "You've got to get it right every night. You can't really improvise and you can't do all those things you used to do when you were playing in blues bands and other things. Even playing the same stuff every night, it's got to sound exciting!"

Playing the same parts night after night might sound simple but there are many challenges to being a theatre guitarist, not least the commute. "It's quite exhausting," adds Eddie. "You come out, your hearing's a bit shot because of having to crank up the headphones, you've been looking at sheets for like two hours so your eyes can't see very well, and sometimes you've got a two-hour drive home! It's not ideal but I can't complain really. One of the good things about playing in a pit is that nobody can really see you, so you don't have to perform. I can turn up for work and sit there and look grumpy!"

VINTAGE TONE

Eddie's collection ranges from old favourites to more recent bucket-list acquisitions. But the first guitar he pulls out for our perusal is his number one, a beloved sunburst 1964 ES-335 that he's owned since 1988. "A guy in the next village had it up for sale," he says. "Originally it was £250 but my mate told him it was worth more so he added another £200! Because I was a mad fan of Steely Dan, I just wanted a 335 and I thought an old one would be best. I knew Larry Carlton had an old one as I'd seen it on his album cover. As this was pre-internet, I didn't know what year his was."



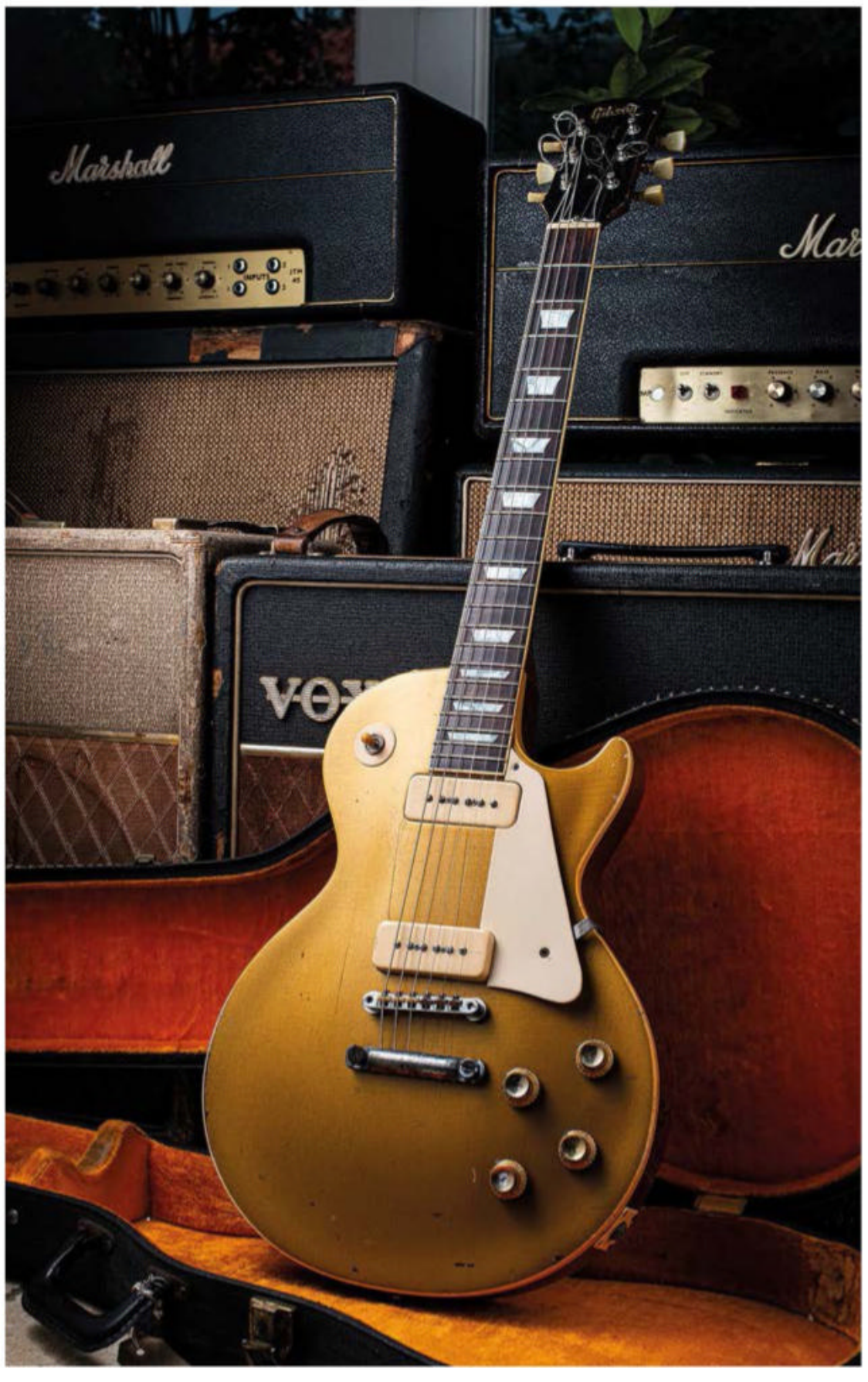
Two P-90 Goldtops – a 1953 model and a 1968 example (opposite) – feature in Eddie's collection alongside a 1971 Gibson Les Paul Custom

Much later, Eddie almost heard Carlton's fabled 1968 ES-335 in the flesh. But it was not to be. "A few years ago, Larry Carlton actually gigged in Hull," he says. "He walked onstage and he had this cherry thing with a Bigsby and I thought, 'What's going on here?' At the time, his guitar had gone missing. He has it back now but he'd lost it on a plane or something. I was a bit gutted not to see him with *that* guitar, it just sounds like nothing on Earth."

Despite playing his ES-335 for several decades, including stints on the road during his twenties and thirties, much of the wear and tear on Eddie's guitar was present when he bought it, including the Bigsby 'snakebite' screw holes. Though he got into vintage guitars quite early on in his career, the vintage amplifiers wouldn't arrive until later. For a long time, Eddie's main amp was a red-knob Fender Twin, which "just gets louder, and louder, and louder, and shatters your teeth".

These days, Eddie's amplifier collection could be the subject of a standalone article in itself and includes a formidable pile of old Marshalls, an array of tweed Fenders and a pair of Voxes that includes a fawn AC30 formerly owned by Toe Rag Studios and which Jack White used on The White Stripes' smash-hit album *Elephant*. The Marshalls that make such an excellent backdrop for our guitar photography today include a 1968 4x12 formerly owned by Jack Bruce, along with vintage JTM45 and JMP100 heads and a tremolo-equipped 50-watt combo. The 4x12 cabinet was part of Bruce's rig at Cream's legendary farewell shows at The Royal Albert Hall and was later gifted to lyricist Pete Brown, who went on to sell it some years later.

Much like when he's buying guitars, Eddie's rationale for buying amplifiers is all about ticking the classic boxes. "I think you have this checklist in your head," he says. "For example, I wanted an old



ES-335 because of Larry Carlton. I wanted a beat-up Strat because of Rory Gallagher and Stevie Ray Vaughan. And I wanted a JTM45. That came up and it's really, really nice. I thought it was a '66 to start with but I think it might be '65. I bought the combo about five years ago. I think it's a late '69. I was up in Edinburgh with *Hairspray* and I'd looked on eBay and in the classifieds and saw a guy selling that. I was able to get a taxi to pick it up, take it back to the venue, put it on the truck to the next venue and take it home from there."

GOLDEN GODS

Not to be confused with his stoptail-equipped 1968 model, Eddie's 1953 Les Paul Goldtop was purchased from ATB Guitars in Cheltenham, where he compared it to several other Goldtops in the store that day and chose to walk away with this one. "It's ridiculous," he enthuses. "It's just really, really

Stomping ground

Eddie has an impressive collection of vintage pedals, several of which are in their original boxes. "I sometimes use them on recordings and I'll take them out when I do gigs every now and then," he says. "Not so much of late, obviously, because there are no gigs! When I bought them, I just wanted to hear them. It's nice to grab them and try them next to each other and see how they get on. I've gone a bit nuts over the past year or so buying overdrive pedals. All the boutique ones with different tones and stuff are quite nice. But then you go back to a Tube Screamer and they just sound right. Back in my blues days with the 335, the Strat and the Twin, other than a volume pedal, the ST9 Super Tube Screamer with the mid-boost was all I had."

Eddie's vintage pedal arsenal includes some rare birds indeed – several with their original boxes intact

resonant. One of the things I love about it is that the pickups have a really scrunchy, almost Telecaster-like sound to them. They're not thick like some P-90s are. They're thinner-sounding than the pickups in the '68, which sound more like humbuckers. I love playing it. It's great. I tend to use it on about five, to get that kind of Tele sound, and just sort of boost it on about eight for solos. It's just incredible. You were saying earlier how if you've got a Telecaster and a Goldtop you are pretty much covered – I'm almost covered just with that Goldtop."

Almost. But not quite. Eddie picked up his fantastically battle-scarred 1963 Fender Stratocaster from Mike Long at ATB Guitars about a decade ago, via eBay.

"It was before he had the shop," Eddie explains. "Although the Strat's from 1963, it came with a 1959 neck – a previous owner had literally worn the neck out playing in clubs in LA for years, so they'd just found another old neck and stuck that on. But I thought, 'If it looks that good, it's going to sound amazing – it's got to!' You look at it and go, 'That's a guitar that's been performed with.' Someone has jumped around onstage with that and their jewellery has marked it and all of that stuff."

But the guitar has since undergone another swap. "The neck that's on it now is from a 1961 Strat that I had years ago. It's a Lake Placid Blue, refinished thing. But I'd gotten used to the shape of the neck. The Lake Placid Blue one now has the '59 neck on it that came with this. It's still a great guitar, I just never use it. Now that I've got this, if I play a Strat at all, I play this one."

The 1963 Stratocaster may be his go-to but when it comes to Strats, Eddie has plenty of choice. There's also the small matter of a refinished 1957 model. "I bought the '57 from a guy in Newcastle via a classified advert," he says. "I remember buying it thinking it needed a refret, so I planned to put it away until I got it refretted. I didn't really touch it and I was gigging the '63 because I really liked it. But I got the '57 out only last week and it's just ridiculous! It's just such a nice guitar, with the big chunky V neck on it. I'm a big fan of big necks now. It always used to be skinny necks, back in the 1980s or whatever when everyone was playing all that shred stuff. But I never got any good at that to be honest!"

INTRODUCING THE NEW

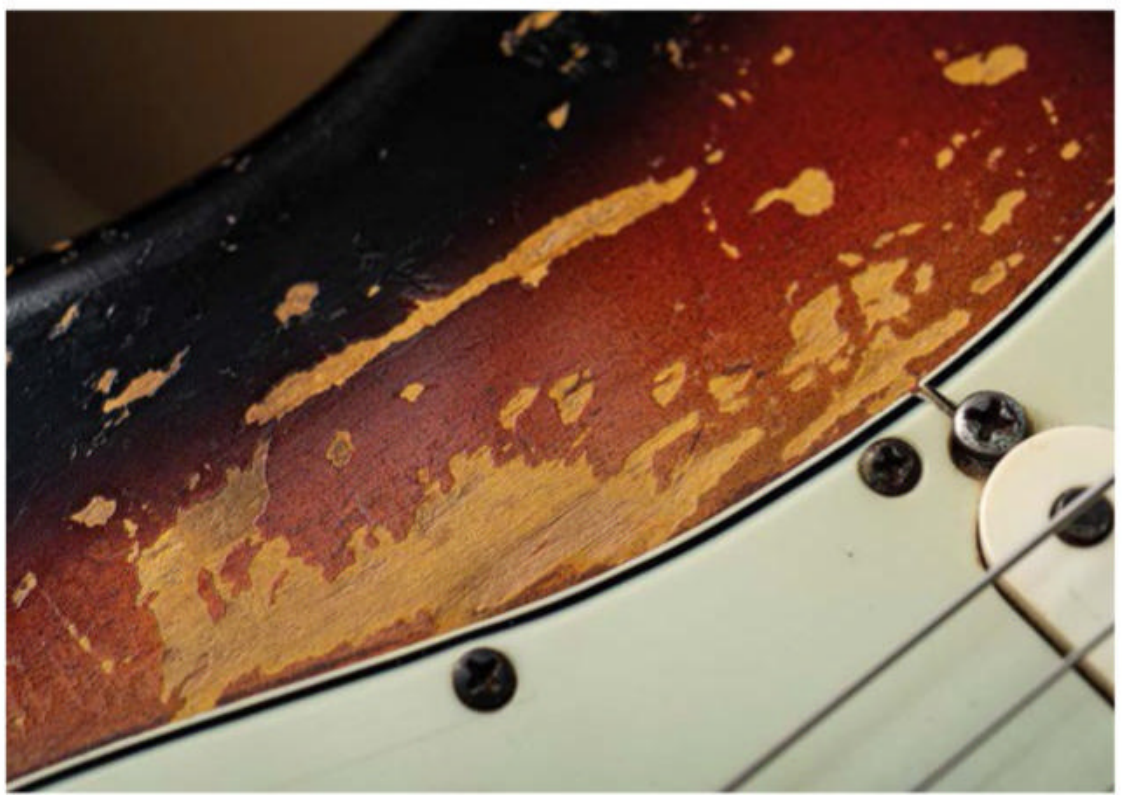
META SERIES

MBM-1

Manson x Cort®

Guitar.com EDITOR'S CHOICE

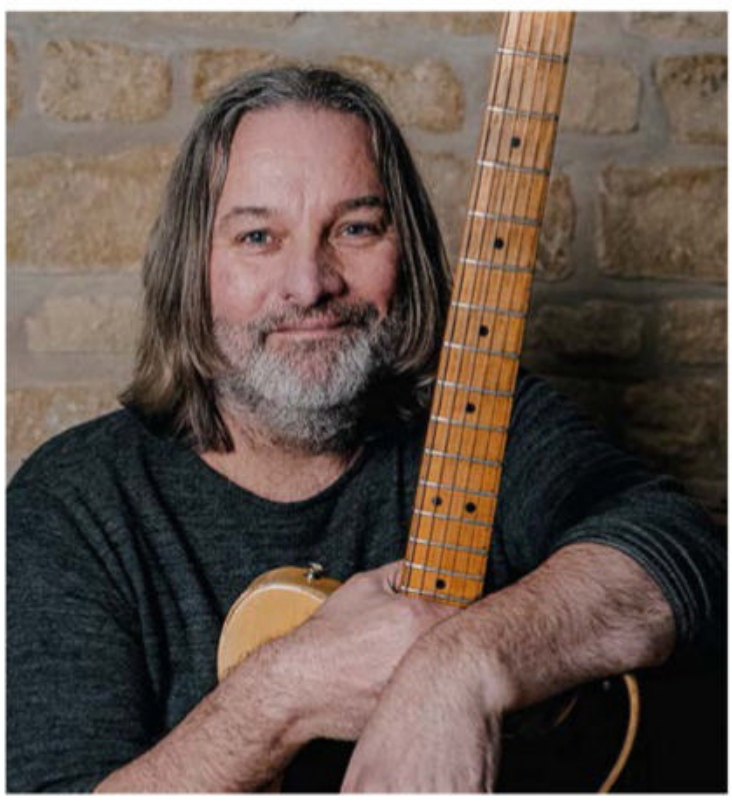
cortguitars.com/mbm-1 | mansonguitarworks.com | 440distribution.com



ATOMIC AGE

Of all the guitars that Eddie posts on Instagram, it's probably his 1952 Blackguard that gets the most love. Though it has an Esquire decal, its neck pickup was fitted at the factory and the body and neck date are just four days apart.

"GE Smith has exactly the same thing," says Eddie. "For $15, you could send your Esquire back to Fender and they'd put a neck pickup and a new 'guard on it. But it surprised me when I tried it. It sounds like a Tele but it doesn't. It's fatter somehow on the bottom end. It's vastly different to the 1960 model I've got – that's the classic Telecaster sound but this is something else. It sounds huge. It was played for 40-odd years, three nights a week in country and western bars in South Carolina. When I opened the case, all I could smell was cigarette smoke! I've lightly polished it and it's a bit cleaner now but all the sweat and gunk has gone into the lacquer and it's taken on a life of its own."



Eddie's fabulously beaten-up 1963 Fender Stratocaster is now on its third neck but it shows no signs of being retired from regular use

The Blackguard isn't the only treasure that Eddie owns from Fender's early years, and his love affair with tweed amps began with a 1960 Bassman that took him to Hull and back.

"There was a guy from Hull selling it in the classified ads," says Eddie. "Hull's just an hour away, so I thought I'd go and get it. I'd always fancied one. It's *the* classic amp, isn't it? It just sounds three-dimensional. After that, I'm not sure which came next. The Tremolux was a private sale. It was the first Tremolux that I saw up for sale and I thought, 'I'll buy that, because you just don't see them', you know? And it's got that tremolo, which just sounds incredible."

Both Eddie's Deluxe and Super have celebrity connections. "The Deluxe I got from a guy called Jim Cregan, who used to play for Rod Stewart. He said he just used to have that, on full, underneath the stage, and that was all he had when he was gigging with Rod. But he didn't use it any more so he sold it off.

Telecasters from 1960 and 1969 are joined by a refinished 1957 Stratocaster with a wonderful V neck – but Eddie is still on the hunt for another Strat

He had a Celestion in it – I think he probably blew up the Jensen – but I got a late '50s Jensen from the States and stuck that in there. I think it's an organ speaker but it's still a 12-inch Jensen. You turn everything on full and off you go. It's just a really spitty, vibey kind of thing.

"I got the Super from a studio clearance. I think the guys were getting rid of a lot of old analogue stuff; I don't know if they were going digital or what. Apparently the Super used to belong to Gerry Rafferty, who swapped it in for some studio time years ago. There's no hard proof or anything like that but I just fancied it and it sounds great."

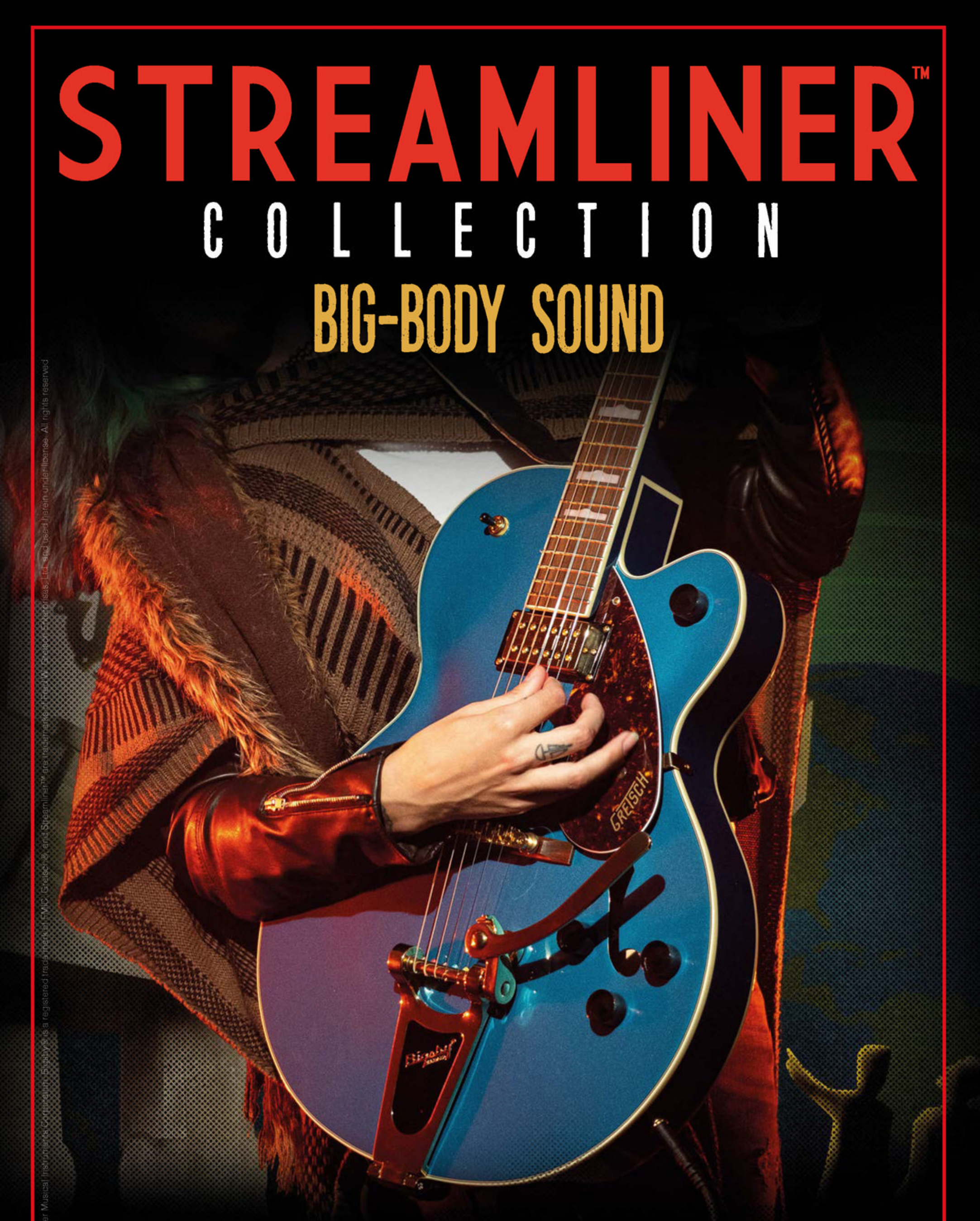
With musical theatre productions and gigs still yet to return, Eddie has been putting all this wonderful gear to good use on a lockdown album project. But is there anything else he's looking to add? "I'm kind of done with buying stuff now… ish," he grins, as we prepare to leave. "I need to get rid of stuff if I want to buy something else. I can't keep going and going… but what I would really like is a 1950s ash-bodied sunburst Strat." Can anybody help him out?

Follow Eddie Tatton on Instagram @eddietattonguitarstuff

STREAMLINER™

COLLECTION

BIG-BODY SOUND



© 2021 Fender Musical Instruments Corporation. Bigsby® is a registered trademark of CMC. Gretsch® and Streamliner™ are trademarks of FMIC. All rights reserved

G2410TG STREAMLINER™ HOLLOW BODY WITH BIGSBY® AND GOLD HARDWARE

GRETSCH®

SPACE & TIME

Continuing his guided tour through the early days of effects, this month JHS Pedals main man Josh Scott is floating in space, where nobody can hear him do much of anything...

WORDS JOSH SCOTT

Last time around, we dug into Samuel Clemens' – aka Mark Twain's – love of guitars, before continuing our journey through the early days of the effected instrument, casting an eye towards the very first guitar effect: tremolo. This time, we're going to explore the other two pillars of those early experiments in guitar effects, both of which remain hugely important to us today. That's right: delay and reverb.

I first experienced the effect of delay the way a lot of us did, as a simple echo. I vividly remember yelling across an empty parking lot and hearing my voice bounce off a brick wall and fly back at me. I was 10 years old and found this infinitely more entertaining than any game on my Atari. Learning that my voice could bounce off the wall like a kickball and that, somehow, a parking lot and a brick wall could duplicate sound? It was pure magic.

I imagine that many musicians throughout history had the same experience: a cowboy strumming his campfire songs at the base of a canyon; a classical guitarist performing in a Spanish chapel; a caveman shouting his love song into an empty cavern. Before it was pressed into pedals, delay was first a natural effect, produced purely by the physical spaces that conspiring noise-makers found themselves in.

TINKER, TAILOR...

In the late 1940s and 1950s, a young guitarist, tinkerer and brilliant engineer named Les Paul wanted to artificially replicate the sound of these encompassing, echo-laden spaces. He longed for his home-studio recordings to have the big, open room sounds of professional studio spaces. As usual, necessity was the mother of invention.

You may only know Les Paul as the name on your favourite guitar's headstock but Les was a man of many talents: he was an inventor, an amazing guitar player and a recording engineer. Les Paul played a pivotal role in the invention of the solidbody electric guitar. In his day, Les and his musical partner Mary Ford (who was arguably the better guitar player) were kind of like an *Andy Griffith Show* version of Beyoncé and Jay-Z. With Les's inventions, their amazing live act and huge radio hits (not to mention their popular TV series), they successfully made the electric guitar a common household appliance just like a vacuum cleaner.

Les would link his reel-to-reel recording units together to create a Frankenstein's monster of audio manipulation. In doing so, he was able to manually create the sound of fake space that he longed for in his recordings. How? Les would record audio onto one tape and have another machine set to play the recorded part back on top of the live sound in real time. This meant that when he hit a note – *twang* – it would go into the recording unit to be recorded, play through the playback unit and be mixed into the live performance, slightly offset. This created a delayed effect – *twang, twang* – and artificial echo was born.

In 1953, after hearing Les Paul's slap delay effect and realising how difficult it was to recreate outside the studio, a music store owner from Illinois created a device he called the EchoSonic. Ray Butts wanted to see whether he could simplify Les Paul's innovative effect for everyday musicians. His solution? An amp with an accessible built-in tape-echo machine.

The EchoSonic became a huge success when it was adopted by Nashville studio legend Chet Atkins, which influenced guitarists such as Scotty Moore and rockabilly superstar Carl Perkins to do the same. Both men's guitar sounds played huge parts in developing the character of Sam Phillips' Memphis Sun Studios, from which the likes of Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash were launched towards worldwide fame.

Over the next few years, standalone tape echo units would enter the market across the world. The popularity of delay exploded throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Les Paul's experiments in replicating the sound of bigger spaces in his home studio had resulted in iconic guitar tones, like those on Elvis's *Mystery Train*, Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love*, Pink Floyd's *One Of These Days* and many more.

BELOW Les Paul was a pioneer in a variety of fields, and his quest to recreate echo-laden concert halls in the studio led to him developing a rudimentary delay effect using two tape machines

The Print Collector / Getty Images • Michael Ochs Archives / Getty Images

Sound waves bouncing between walls, floors, photo frames, coffee mugs, screens; these reflections give every room its own identity

ABOVE Anechoic chambers are used to test audio devices by completely absorbing the reflections of sound in the space – it's an unsettling experience to be inside one

RIGHT Old church pipe organs used the grand physical space of cathedrals as part of the instrument, but as electric organs became the norm and smaller congregations got in on the act, they wanted that majestic sound too – enter the first reverb effects

TANK COMMANDER

A few years ago, while visiting the Boss HQ in Hamamatsu, Japan, I found myself in an anechoic chamber. A giant insulated door swung open and my wife and I walked through it onto a floor made of large rope-like netting. We were floating in mid-air above a huge, open and completely soundproof pit. Above us, below us and all around us, there sat sound treatment whose sole purpose was to prevent the passage of sound. The door we walked through suddenly closed and something crazy happened: for the first time in my life, I didn't hear any reflections. No natural reverb. Essentially, any sound we made died almost as quickly as it was created. As I spoke, I could hear everything inside my head, I could feel and hear sound before it left my mouth. But the sound didn't resound at all.

Even in the name of science, this was a creepy experience. A 2013 article by *Smithsonian Magazine* reported that the longest anyone has been able to stay in the anechoic chamber at Orfield Laboratories, the quietest place on Earth, is 45 minutes. In Hamamastsu, my wife and I lasted about five.

Until I had this admittedly strange experience, I'd never realised that in every moment of our lives, we are constantly hearing reflections, and that those reflections regulate our understanding of depth, space and distance. Think of it like human echolocation. Imagine it: sound waves bouncing like lasers between walls, floors, photo frames, coffee mugs, computer screens; these reflections give every room its own identity. Try it out for yourself. Clap, yell, scream. Scare your neighbours – they can handle it. While delay is a straight line of reflection, with its length determined by how far away the reflection is when it turns around and starts heading back to you (the brick wall and the parking lot), reverb is the sound of thousands of reflections crashing in on you from different angles and distances. If delay is a dripping tap, reverb is Niagara Falls.

In 1939, Laurens Hammond patented a new creation that he called spring reverb. He had a peculiar problem and he found his solution in a modified Bell Labs invention, originally designed to replicate the delay in long-distance phone calls. Hammond made organs, which meant that churches were his primary customer base. Small churches would buy his organs and comment on how they did not sound as "good" as the big pipe organs in a cathedral. Laurens understood that the problem was not his electric organs but spaces they were being used in. If you've ever been to a cathedral and heard a pipe organ in person, you'll know that it creates an enormous, otherworldly sound. The church itself is part of the instrument, and its signature sound comes from the reflecting sound waves that bounce across the vaulted ceilings and hard walls and floors.

Basically, a pipe organ takes on the sound of the building it's housed in – and that sound is truly a heavenly thing to experience.

Hammond used his new invention to send the sound of his electronic organ through long springs that simulated space. At one end of the spring tank is a transducer that causes movement in the springs by sending an audio signal into them. As vibrations happen and remain in the springs, lots of mechanical delays occur. A pickup located on the other end of the spring tank captures this series of delays (artificial reflections), which is mixed back in with the clean sound of the audio input. This revolutionised the sound of the electric organ by giving its users the ability to create fake space – and to make a humble country church sound like the Vatican.

SURF'S UP

It wasn't long before the godfather of surf guitar himself, Dick Dale, was running his vocals and guitar through his Hammond spring-reverb unit. He loved the artificial space that it created in his recordings but couldn't help but wonder whether there was an easier way to produce it for live performances. In 1961, Dale partnered with inventor Leo Fender to produce the world's first standalone reverb unit for guitar. Leo licensed the basic circuit from Hammond and created the Fender Spring Reverb Tank.

When Dale released his hit song *Misirlou* in 1963, it showed off the Fender reverb tank in a big way. Reverb made the guitar larger than life, giving rise to new genres such as surf rock and spaghetti western. You might even say that reverb made Quentin Tarantino a legend; *Pulp Fiction*'s opening credits wouldn't feel the same without Dick Dale's thundering surf anthem pushing the beat.

ABOVE Tape echo units such as this WEM/Watkins Copicat exploded in popularity with guitar players in the 1960s

LEFT As well as being the godfather of surf guitar, Dick Dale also partnered with Leo Fender to produce the world's first spring reverb for guitar

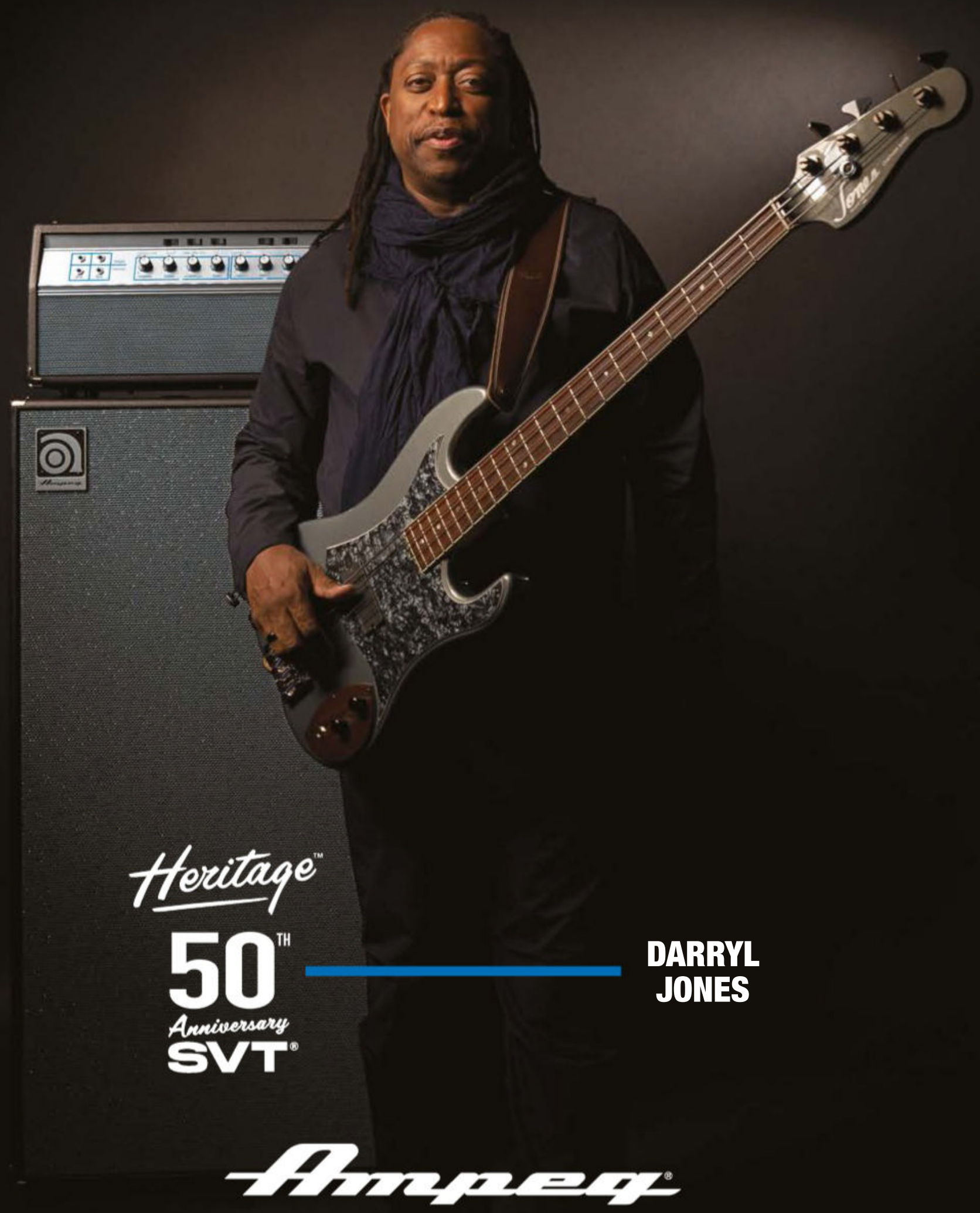
It's hard to overstate how important these early effects – tremolo, echo and reverb – are to music history. They're more than sounds. They changed our culture. Their inventors set electric guitar on an entirely new course. Harry DeArmond, Les Paul, and Leo Fender didn't just give guitar a new voice. They gave it a new language. G

Join Josh Scott for more effects adventures at thejhsshow.com

© Rina Castelnuovo / Bloomberg via Getty Images • Fox Photos / Getty Images • Michael Ochs Archives / Getty Images

CODAMUSIC
www.coda-music.com

TWO ICONS



DARRYL JONES

Ampeg®

Ampeg now available at Coda Music

51a High Street, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 3AH t: 01438 350 815 e: stevenage@coda-music.co.uk
Acoustic Centre 27b Church Lane, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 3QW t: 01438 350815 e: acoustics@coda-music.com

Instant decision 9 months 0% finance
available on all new products over £300 on our website

REVIEWS

CONTENTS

062 GIBSON MURPHY LAB
076 FENDER CHRISSIE HYNDE TELECASTER
080 CORT KX507
084 GRETSCH ELECTROMATIC G5622 CENTER BLOCK
088 MACMULL STINGER
092 GUILD BT-258E DELUXE BARITONE
096 JHS LEGENDS OF FUZZ SERIES
100 BENSON GERMANIUM FUZZ
102 FENDER MUSTANG MICRO
104 ERNIE BALL VOLT

LOOKING FOR MORE REVIEWS?
VISIT GUITAR.COM

THE ART OF AGEING

WORDS HUW PRICE
PHOTOGRAPHY ELEANOR JANE

Gibson fans have waited decades for the company to make vintage-accurate Les Pauls with no caveats, compromises or corners cut. Will their patience be rewarded by the new Murphy Lab models?

If you're unfamiliar with Tom Murphy, let's begin with a brief primer. Murphy was instrumental in the development of Gibson Custom's original Historic Les Paul models that came out in 1993 but he left the company in 1994 to establish his own small shop, Guitar Preservation. It was here that he pioneered many innovative guitar finishing and ageing techniques that are still in use today.

Gibson first got into factory-aged guitars in 1999 after seeing Tom's work, and the subsequent Tom Murphy Aged instruments he worked on for the Nashville brand were regarded by most players as Gibson Custom's top-of-the-line models. Now Gibson has established a specialist guitar-ageing department within the Custom Shop known as the Murphy Lab, along with a 50-strong collection of Murphy Lab guitars that the company claims offer a significant step up from previous Gibson Custom ranges such as Collector's Choice.

Gibson's senior director of product development, Mat Koehler, explains how this came about. "The Collector's Choice line was dropped in 2017 because it wasn't exciting any more," says Mat. "Without wishing to disparage any of our collaborators, we were just copying rich people's un-special Bursts. I didn't like how one-note it was getting and I wanted to make it more diverse and not be tied up in contracts. We started out by asking what we could do to provide an authentic vintage ownership experience."

Murphy would soon get the opportunity to bring a new ageing process to the table at Gibson. "I moved back to the Nashville area about five years ago", he recalls, taking up the narrative. "I was still doing occasional finishing work for Gibson but [brand president] Cesar Gueikian needed me full-time to fulfil their back orders for the Murphy Aged guitars. I had developed this new ageing process and, when I showed him my guitar, I told him that's what the future of ageing guitars at Gibson should be. I consider the new process a major upgrade and the timing was just perfect."

"We both thought it was a real vintage guitar", Koehler admits. "Tom put us right and revealed it was one of his. We were attempting to age guitars in-house but I think we all knew the results were simply better when Tom did it."

A master of his craft, Tom Murphy now commands a dedicated Gibson team that bears his name

© Gibson

TRAINING GROUND

Gueikian came up with the Murphy Lab concept, the idea being that Murphy would lead a team of people and train them to use his ageing techniques. "Before, you had Murphy Aged guitars, with me doing all the ageing work, and you had the in-house versions being done in the Custom Shop," says Tom. "When I came back to Gibson, it was decided that all the ageing should have my name associated with it.

"There are at least two elements to these products, checking and ageing, and they're entirely separate things. Achieving a vintage and worn look is a craft and that's teachable. I had this new process, so the existing staff needed to be shown how to adjust their techniques, processes and tools. The phrase 'But *they* always told us…' came up a few times. I'd always say, '*They* aren't here anymore, it's just me, but ride along, guys, and it'll be fine'.

"We had to establish some consistency and the guys have been great. When people ask who is doing the ageing, the answer is that we all are and we're doing it my way. The beauty of this is that I no longer have to put my initials on individual guitars because my signature is on the entire operation."

LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

"It was up to Tom and me to decide on the specific characteristics and how many levels of ageing we should have," says Koehler. "We added to the Custom Shop product line tremendously, with 50 new core items, while keeping it open to Made 2 Measure [Murphy Lab ageing is available on custom-ordered M2M guitars as well as in the Murphy Lab Collection].

Murphy Lab allows us to create super-vibey, authentic instruments at that same level of detail as the Collector's Choice models. But they're more unique and have more soul."

The Murphy Lab ageing options are spread across four tiers, the first being Ultra Light, which is described as "a prized possession that has spent most of its long life stored carefully in its case", and features minimal lacquer checking and VOS patina hardware. The next level, Light ageing, adds "more intense lacquer checking patterns, accompanied by minor dings, pick trails, finish flaking, and softened edges throughout".

Taking things up a notch or two, Heavy ageing is designed to simulate the look of a guitar that has been "out on the road for decades", with "significant wear and tear, lots of buckle rash, light arm wear, neck wear, peghead face wear, and prominent checking patterns throughout". The hardware itself is aged by the Murphy Lab.

Finally, there's Ultra Heavy, designed to evoke "half a century of touring mileage", with "major buckle rash, heavy arm wear, visible pick, neck, and peghead face wear, and areas of exposed wood." Additionally, all four levels feature hand-rolled fingerboard edges.

There's good news for anyone who wants the ultimate Tom Murphy treatment too. "There is an option on the Murphy Lab price list for Tom to spray your guitar," Koehler reveals. "He's only doing sunburst finishes and it's got to be a standard sort of sunburst. The ageing is done by Tom and his team, and he's especially picky about the Heavy and Ultra Heavy Aged models."

We're interested to learn if the Murphy Lab colours are lightfast or if owners should be aware that their guitars might fade further. Mat tells us that aniline dye is "a pain in the butt" and, although the Murphy Lab is using it for SGs and Les Paul backs, a different type of red dye is used for sunbursts. It will fade eventually but not as fast or as far as traditional aniline. It's reassuring because, if you choose a Murphy Lab Les Paul on the basis of colour, you can be confident that it will stay that way for many years.

CRACKING CODE

Tom Murphy's reputation with a blade notwithstanding, in something of a shift for Gibson Custom, the lacquer checking on the Murphy Lab models appears to be thermal rather than surgical in origin. Mat provides some clues.

Our Murphy Lab Cherry Tea Burst Les Paul features Light ageing and a less faded finish than its Heavy Aged sibling

Fine checking forms naturally around chips and dents as it would on a 1950s guitar – there's no evidence of razorblade work here

"We're using a proprietary lacquer formula," says Koehler. "1950s and 1960s lacquer was reverse-engineered so it could be recreated in its original brittleness. Without going too deep into trade secrets, I can say that it's not just the lacquer that's at work. Tom's still using his bag of tricks, so occasionally he'll pull out a blade. But the checking itself is established by the lacquer formula."

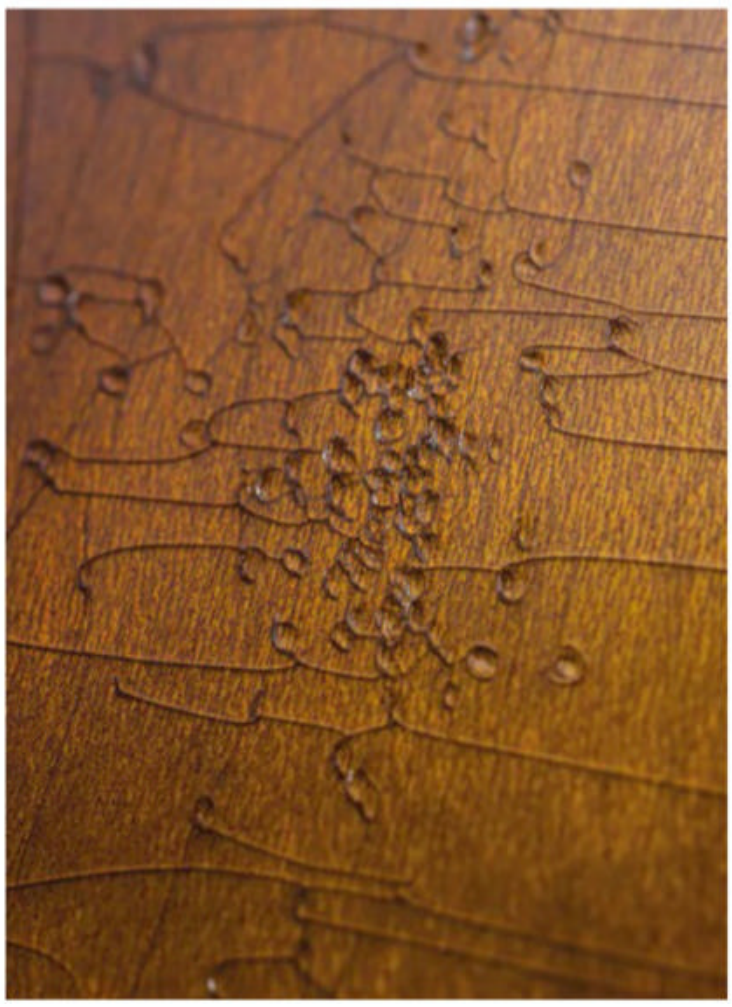
Tom is quick to confirm Mat's assertions. "That's exactly right," he agrees. "We all know the trademark of a vintage guitar is cracked lacquer, and that comes from expansion and contraction of the wood. I did that artificially for years, with some success, but what we have now is real. We have an old finish on a new guitar – it's as simple as that.

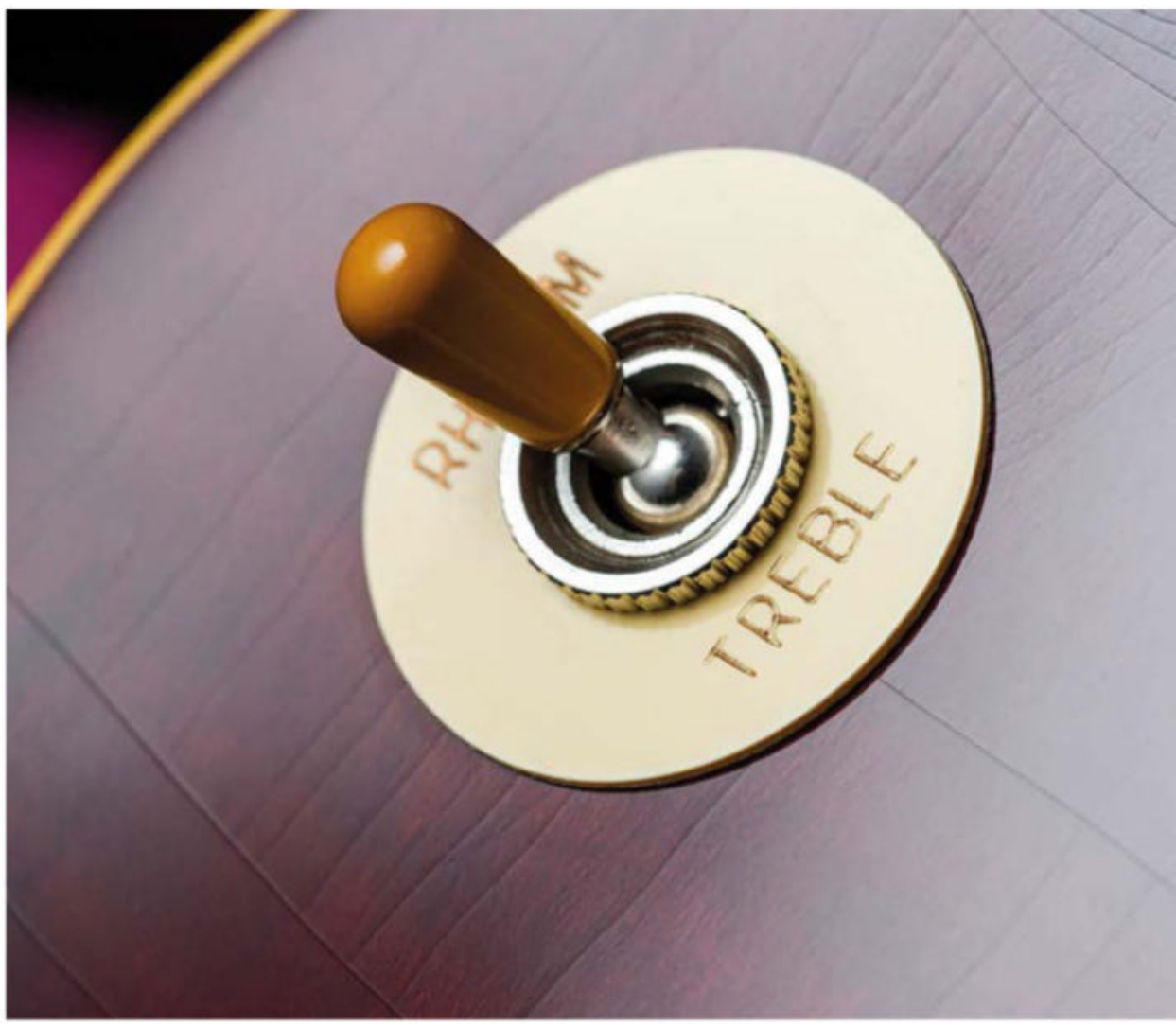
"Like an old finish, it isn't very durable. It's not for everybody but it is awesome for ageing. Not only does it enhance the checking, when we're chipping it to create buckle rash it responds like an old finish. When I first saw it happen I was really excited, and I still am today. So, I don't have to do art any more, I can now do craft."

Guitar.com EDITOR'S CHOICE

KEY FEATURES

GIBSON MURPHY LAB 1959 LES PAUL STANDARD CHERRY TEA BURST LIGHT AGED
PRICE £6,999 (with Lifton reissue 5-latch case)
DESCRIPTION Solidbody electric guitar, made in the USA
BUILD Fijian mahogany body with bookmatched maple cap, Royalite body binding, set mahogany neck, bound Indian rosewood fretboard, celluloid nitrate inlays, 22 authentic medium-jumbo frets, nylon nut, vintage-correct plastics
HARDWARE ABR-1 tune-o-matic bridge, aluminium stop tailpiece, Kluson single-line, single-ring tuners
ELECTRONICS 2x Custom Bucker alnico III unpotted pickups, vintage taper CTS volume and tone potentiometers, 3-way pickup selector, paper-in-oil bumble bee tone capacitors
SCALE LENGTH 24.57"/624mm
NECK WIDTH 42.8mm at nut, 51.9mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 22.3mm at first fret, 24.4mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 35.9mm at nut, 51.6mm at bridge
WEIGHT 3.7kg/8.2lb
LEFT HANDERS No
FINISH Light Aged Cherry Tea Burst nitrocellulose lacquer
CONTACT gibson.com





WOOD WORK

If you're wondering whether the guitars that get the Murphy Lab treatment are specially produced or hand-selected by Murphy's team, Koehler's answer may surprise you. "The guitars themselves are basically just Historic reissues", he reveals, "so every guitar in our Murphy Lab collection is the same as our regular '59 Standard, with hide-glue neck and body joints. The only thing that's going to differ is the lacquer and level of ageing. The neck profile has not changed from the 2019 models. I didn't want a random neck profile or some sort of average of all. I wanted to use

Though the finishes on our review guitars have been incredibly well executed, there's still room for improvement when it comes to hardware and plastics

The finish chipping on the Light Aged model's headstock reveals how thinly the Murphy Lab lacquer has been applied

a specific neck profile that's very comfortable. The profile we selected was scanned from an original '59. It's a pretty well-known Burst and a favourite of mine and various artists. It's a little bit thinner than a lot of people are expecting, because the Custom Shop made a lot of baseball bat necks with fat shoulders. Having been lucky enough to handle many '59s, what I'm looking for is more of a V feel with very soft shoulders. Then the neck roll really hammers it home. But we make a distinction for the different years, so for 1958 and earlier reissues we're using a fatter profile, and smaller frets now where appropriate."

HISTORIC HARDWARE

The Murphy Lab ages bridges and tailpieces to match its heavier levels of lacquer ageing and the hardware itself comes from Gibson's regular production line. "We do our best interpretation currently for the bridge, and the stopbar is aluminium," says Mat. "We are actively working to improve the broken-in look and feel of the metal parts."

Koehler is keen to point out the time, effort and balancing act that must be considered when introducing new processes and parts.

"People often ask why we withhold things but it's not like that," he says. "It's really a function of how much engineering time we can dedicate to any one project, and finding a good time to integrate new parts. The most recent example is thinner thumbwheels. There's a lot that goes on for each of those changes and our experience is that when we try to introduce too many changes at once, it's like a butterfly effect that causes problems elsewhere.

"Manufacturability is a drawback, due to supply chain and modern compliance restrictions. Even nickel right now is hanging by a thread in terms of availability. We may know what it is we want to achieve but we often have to compromise on some minor details."

Offering a tantalising glimpse into the future, Tom adds, "We have a new process that's about to come online that will allow us to achieve results that are so realistic." What that entails, though, we'll have to wait and see.

Replicas of vintage Les Pauls don't come any better than this Green Lemon Fade Heavy Aged model

PLASTICS FANTASTIC?

The Murphy Lab plastics are a legacy of the True Historic range introduced in 2015 and, although they look good in terms of colour and are vintage-correct when it comes to materials and manufacturing methods, no attempt has been made to age them. It's a little incongruous considering the obvious care and craft that has gone into the finishing and ageing elsewhere, something Mat is willing to concede.

"When it comes to the plastics, I don't feel it's something that Tom or anybody on his team can do that well right now", he admits, candidly.

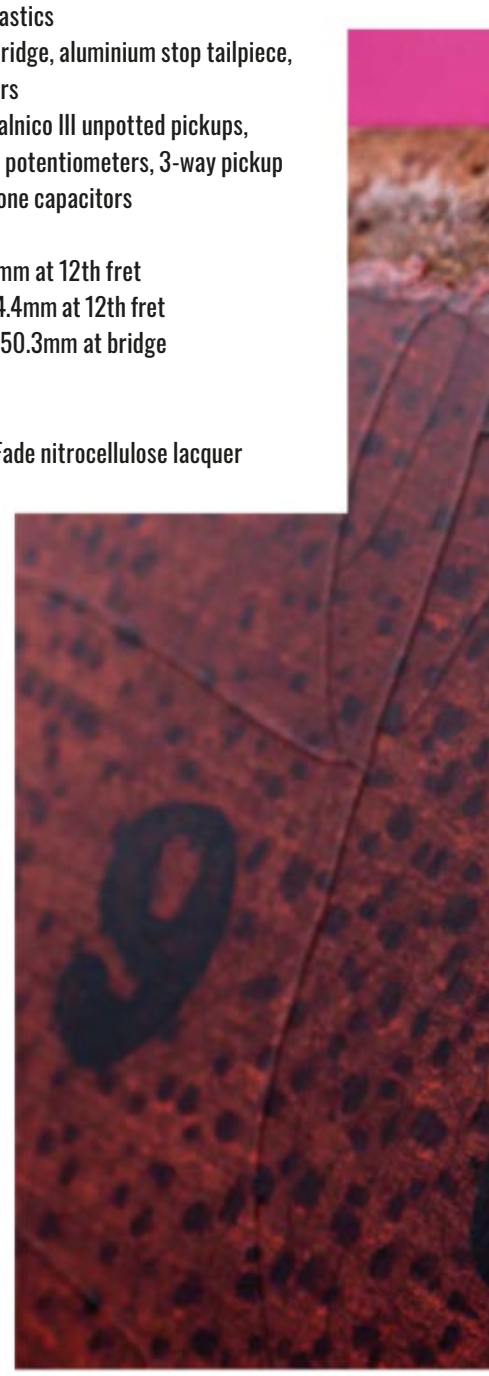
"We went down the rabbit hole recreating the chemical compounds but, to me personally, I don't care what the plastic parts are made from because if they don't look original, I'm not a fan.

"At the moment, we're involved in re-scanning vintage parts from Gibson's own collection, so we're committed to improving that. But given our supply chain at the moment and our level of acumen at the Custom Shop about how plastics age, the best we can do right now is provide customers with chemically recreated parts and leave the ageing for some future incorporation."

Guitar.com EDITOR'S CHOICE

KEY FEATURES

GIBSON MURPHY LAB 1959 LES PAUL STANDARD GREEN LEMON FADE HEAVY AGED
PRICE £7,899 (with aged Lifton reissue 5-latch case)
DESCRIPTION Solidbody electric guitar, made in the USA
BUILD Fijian mahogany body with bookmatched maple cap, Royalite body binding, set mahogany neck, bound Indian rosewood fretboard, celluloid nitrate inlays, 22 authentic medium-jumbo frets, nylon nut, vintage-correct plastics
HARDWARE ABR-1 tune-o-matic bridge, aluminium stop tailpiece, Kluson single-line, single-ring tuners
ELECTRONICS 2x Custom Bucker alnico III unpotted pickups, vintage taper CTS volume and tone potentiometers, 3-way pickup selector, paper-in-oil bumble bee tone capacitors
SCALE LENGTH 24.57"/624mm
NECK WIDTH 42.9mm at nut, 52.1mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 22mm at first fret, 24.4mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 35.7mm at nut, 50.3mm at bridge
WEIGHT 3.8kg/8.4lb
LEFT HANDERS No
FINISH Heavy Aged Green Lemon Fade nitrocellulose lacquer



ELECTRONIC SOUND

The controls and components also pre-date the Murphy Lab, having undergone a revamp in 2019. Paper-in-oil bumble bee tone capacitors combine with potentiometers that were reverse-engineered from 1950s pots to recreate the original taper. According to Mat, Gibson even considered resurrecting the Centralab brand. Murphy Lab Les Pauls feature Custom Buckers with alnico III magnets, which Gibson finally stopped wax-potting in 2019. The specs are not entirely vintage-correct but Mat has his own take on that.

"I believe that those original pickups aged, so I'm happy with our current Custom Buckers because to me they sound like a new Les Paul would've sounded. George Gruhn and I have a running argument about this because he doesn't believe electronics age. But right now, we're happy with the Custom Buckers."

UP CLOSE

As we get to grips with our review guitars, the brown five-latch cases offer an encouraging start. One of them has even been aged and, when we open it up, it seems to have a pleasantly old aroma.

We've been sent two 1959 Les Paul Standards from the middle of the range – a Light Aged example in Cherry Tea Burst and a Heavy Aged Green Lemon Fade. Both have bookmatched maple tops with gorgeous figuring that isn't too intense, and very attractive Fijian mahogany bodies.

The only differences between these guitars are the colours and levels of ageing, so all the features are shared. Highlights include Royalite body binding, celluloid inlays and period-correct nylon nuts. We like the vintage-style single-line, single-ring Kluson tuners too, though they won't be everybody's first choice.

Clearly the aged finishes are the main event and here there's some difference. The Cherry Tea Burst model's back is a strong red, with checking that covers the body and runs along the neck and headstock. There's no buckle rash and the finish has only been chipped away in a couple of strategic spots.

The top sports countless micro dents that have allowed the lacquer checking lines to form around them in an entirely natural way. There's chipping around the front edges of the headstock and the lacquer appears to be extremely thin. The finish has also shrunk into the grain and the slightly dulled gloss looks very convincing. The colour is a matter of taste but the yellow centre almost perfectly matches this writer's 1956 ES-225.

The Heavy Aged Green Lemon Fade represents quite a jump in distress levels. Heavy relic'ing can veer into unconvincing excess but what the Murphy Lab has pulled off here is a triumph. The back is a far richer shade of dark cherry and the hint of green in the top is superbly judged. Buckle rash and neck wear are added, along with far greater forearm wear and a handful of more serious dents.

The dents are more numerous and varied in size, and the lacquer checking is extensive. In fact, compared to a Collector's Choice model we've sourced for comparison, the Murphy Lab's checking feels smooth and the overall effect makes the Custom Shop's earlier ageing attempts look rather lacklustre.

Our only criticism is that in areas with extensive ageing, it's apparent that the vast majority of the dents have been induced using a single tool. The shape and orientation of the damage spots is a little too uniform, even if that's only apparent under very close scrutiny.

Buckle rash and neck wear ensure that the Heavy Aged model lives up to its promise, with its richer cherry back and subtly verdant hue on the top demonstrating its senior status

HANDS ON

Both guitars are on the lighter end of the vintage spectrum and the neck shapes are indistinguishable. Everybody feels differently about necks but having played numerous 1950s Les Pauls, we feel that Gibson has settled on a perfect profile here. A soft-shouldered soft V transitions to a fuller roundness that never gets unwieldy. It's almost a fantasy 1950s neck profile and, in addition to being ideal for a '59 reissue, we prefer it to many of the vintage necks we've grappled with.

Both models boast the same Kluson tuners and bound Indian rosewood 'boards with trapezoid inlays, as well as identical electronics

The feel is slinky, perhaps thanks in part to the 'rule of 18' fret spacing. This old-school method of calculating the intervals results in a slightly shorter scale length and usually contributes to easy playing and a marginally rounder tone. Both these guitars sound full, deep and clear unplugged, and the natural sustain is unmistakeable.

There's little to choose between them but the Green Lemon Fade model's clarity, string-to-string balance and woody midrange voicing just edges it. Guitars are made from natural materials so this variation is only to be expected, and it demonstrates that trying before buying is always preferable.

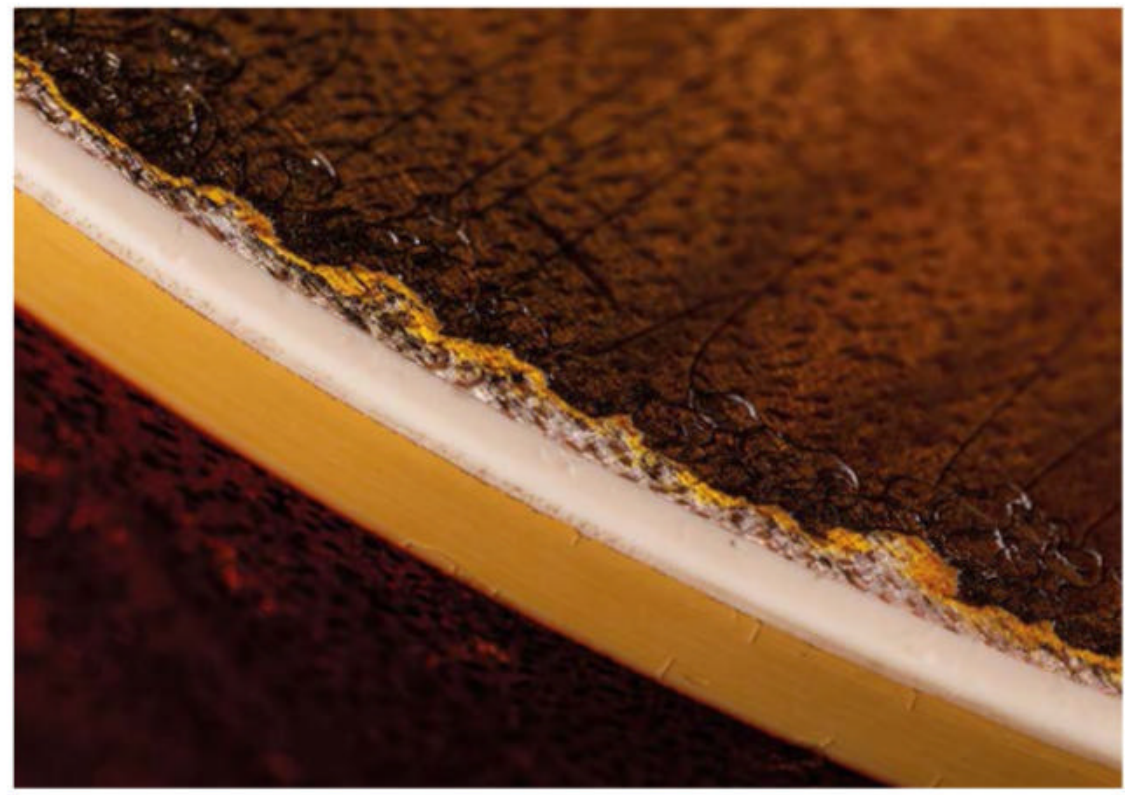
Testing the Murphy Lab models next to a 2016 Collector's Choice and a genuine early 1960 Burst proves revealing. Firstly, the unpotted Custom Buckers in the Murphy Lab guitars are vastly superior to the Collector's Choice model's pickups, sounding clearer, far less harsh and closer in voicing to the vintage PAFs.

The vintage PAFs have more of a 3D quality, plus extended upper harmonics and greater clarity. But the new Custom Buckers provide a very similar midrange voicing, with ample quack from the bridge and a fluty vocal quality from the neck. With the same amp settings, the modern pickups can seem harsh and shouty next to the vintage units. But you can dial that out easily enough. We find the controls similar in response to the vintage ones and clarity is retained when you turn down the volume.

How do the Murphy Lab guitars compare? The Light Aged model is a wonderful instrument but there's something special about the Heavy Aged guitar's ethereal sustain and tonal balance that makes it stand out. In fact, the Heavy Aged Green Lemon Fade model is, by some margin, the best looking, playing and sounding modern Les Paul we have ever played.

Having spent time with various Collector's Choice Les Pauls, there's much to like about them. But we always find the relic'ing unconvincing – the colours can seem a bit off and they never make you feel as if you're playing a genuine vintage guitar. Furthermore, we don't know of any serious player with a Collector's Choice guitar who hasn't swapped out the pickups – and many upgrade the hardware and controls too. Do the Murphy Lab models address these shortcomings?

Taking a cold, hard look – as we're obliged to – the answer is yes and no. The Murphy Lab has raised the bar considerably when it comes to lacquer ageing and the finishes are beautifully applied. With aspects like the binding scraping along the fretboard rollover and



the jagged edges where the lacquer has been chipped off, the attention to detail is extremely impressive too. In combination with the sublime neck profile and ideal weights of our guitars, it really is enough to make you feel like you're playing a 1950s classic. For a modern factory-built guitar, that's a considerable achievement. But it's still a work in progress.

There's nothing remarkable about the hardware and, despite the ageing, the bridge saddle corners are still sharp enough to cut your hand. The zamak alloy ABR-1 bridges and tailpieces that Gibson used during the Burst era had a big influence, so if you're properly obsessive about vintage tone as well as looks, you'll still have to source costly original parts or high-end repros. We also think the shiny switches are a disappointing oversight and the pristine plastics detract slightly from the Murphy Lab's stellar work.

PICKUP LINES

With Brazilian rosewood off the table, the pachyderm in the parlour is always going to be the pickups. Granted, vintage Les Paul fans tend to obsess more than most over period details but, if you want your Les Paul to sound just like a vintage example, then the pickups are by far the most important factor.

Gibson
Gibson

Both guitars come in Lifton reissue five-latch cases, with the Heavy Aged model's also sporting age-appropriate rust

We like the unpotted Custom Buckers and enjoy the tones that they produce but they don't quite sound like authentic vintage PAFs – or indeed the best boutique replicas.

Given the high ticket prices of these guitars, you might reasonably expect them to be fitted with the finest humbuckers known to humankind. We've always wanted to ask someone senior at Gibson if the company ever intends to make vintage-style PAFs again and, to his credit, Mat is remarkably forthcoming when we do.

"We have the recipe book for PAFs and we're keenly aware of what it takes," he says, "but when we put those components together along with the original magnet formula – which is unusual and not one that is frequently used – the resulting pickups didn't sound like PAFs.

"Vintage PAFs are a lot darker and more midrange-heavy than people think, and if you loaded your guitar with a set of 1959 PAFs, most people probably wouldn't prefer them. Gibson was sourcing alnico IV in the late 1950s from a telephone company, for humbuckers specifically, but we don't know much about the makeup of the magnets they got. For playing at home, most people would prefer the sound of an alnico III pickup and not alnico IV. We should have owned the pickup market for Gibson-style pickups and we don't. That's an opportunity that we have been aware of all the time but the time hasn't been right. What I can say is that we are going to tell stories that have never been told, with never-before-seen blueprints and archives, and we will be making extremely historically accurate PAFs in the future."

The darkness and midrange heaviness that Koehler describes here are not characteristics that we associate with the many original PAFs we have tried. But we'll agree to differ, and we're excited by the prospect of Gibson finally getting around to making proper PAFs again.

Regarding pricing, as you might expect: the heavier the ageing, the higher the price. Despite what militant anti-relic'ers may think, ageing guitars to this standard demands a lot of time and considerable skill, and that inevitably adds to the unit price. With £900 separating our Light and Heavy Aged review models, that seems like a reasonable mark-up.

Ultra Light is the cheapest option (£6,099) and if you would prefer to write your own story onto a guitar, Gibson's new lacquer formulation will allow you to do just that. But remember, all the Murphy Lab models will continue to age naturally.

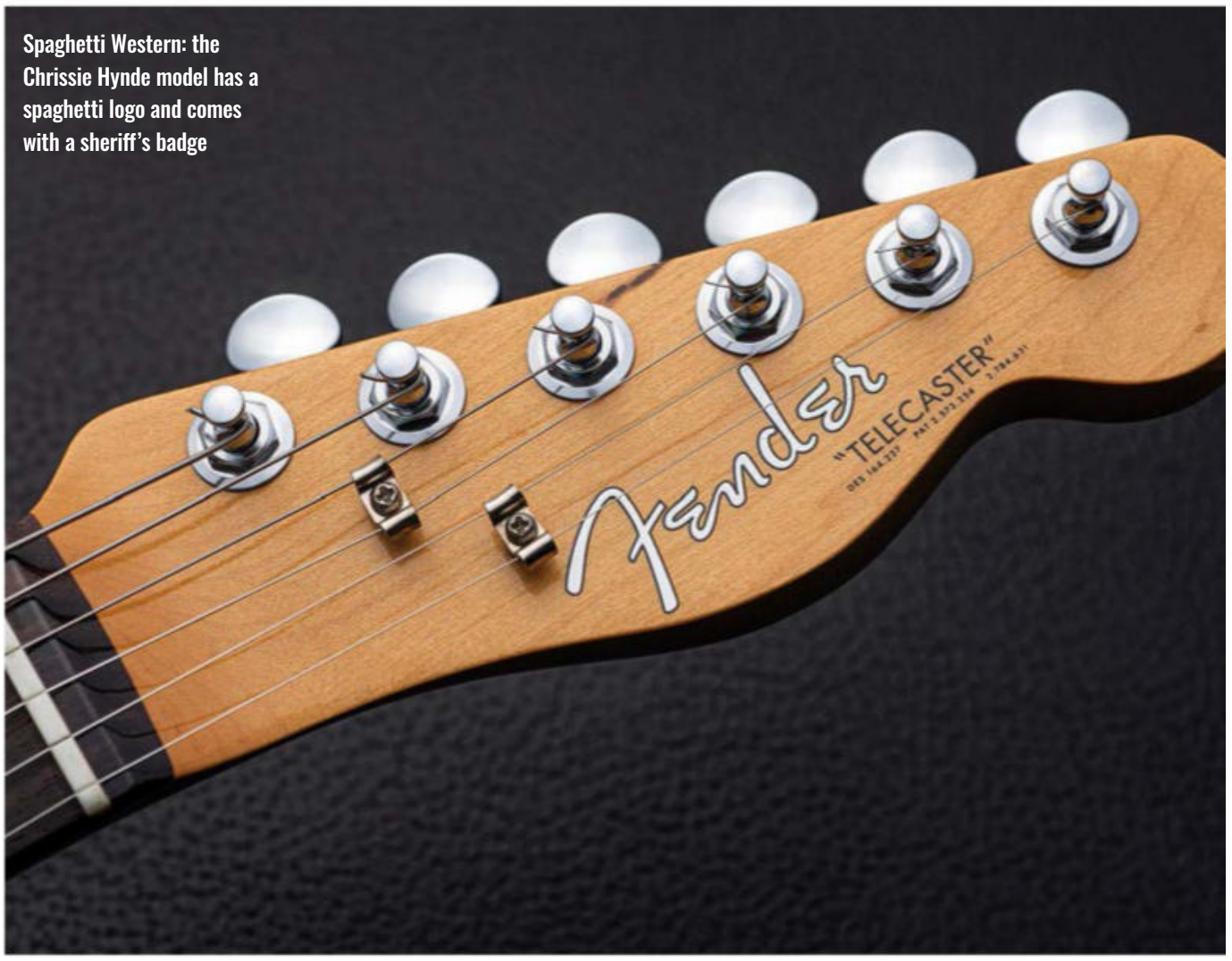
Both of these guitars will live long in our memory and we can't wait to see some of the other models that are getting the Murphy Lab treatment. Admittedly, we have reservations about some of the parts. But if you've always dreamed of owning a vintage Les Paul replica that looks and feels like the real thing, the wait could well be over.

9/10 **The Murphy Lab effect has been profound. These are the finest and most convincing recreations of vintage Gibsons the company has ever produced**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Eastman SB59/v **£2,099**
Rock N Roll Relics Heartbreaker **£4,295**
Heritage Custom Core Collection H-150 Artisan Aged **£4,299**

DEPUTY
MARSHAL
APPALOOSA
FENDER



Spaghetti Western: the Chrissie Hynde model has a spaghetti logo and comes with a sheriff's badge

FENDER
CHRISSIE HYNDE TELECASTER

WORDS HUW PRICE

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

The Pretenders star has joined forces with Fender to create a signature model based on her stage and studio favourite. Is it worth shelling out for or should you keep your brass in your pocket?

There may be some confusion about Chrissie Hynde's favourite Telecaster. Her guitar tech seems to think it's a 1961 model – or at least the body is. Fender's promotional material suggests that this signature model has a 1965 neck, and photos of the original appear to depict a rosewood-veneer fretboard with celluloid marker dots and a spaghetti logo. Chrissie's original might be something of a mongrel, then, but it's been her number-one since she purchased it many years ago – and it's been lovingly recreated here for this new signature model made in Fender's Ensenada facility on the Pacific coast of Mexico's Baja California peninsula.

The features here are indicative of a vintage guitar that has been tweaked for stability and practicality on the road. Six stainless-steel saddles combine with Fender-branded locking tuners and there are a pair of string trees too. Although the lacquer finish is described as 'Road Worn', the Fade Ice Blue Metallic body and tinted maple neck are immaculate. The distress is confined to the metal parts – the buttons of the locking tuners excepted – and it's all very subtle and tasteful.

This is a guitar that begs to be picked up and played. There's no fancy wiring, just CTS potentiometers with neck/both/bridge switching and a ceramic tone capacitor. The pickups are Fender's Vintage-Style '50s units and, just like Hynde's original, the bridge pickup boasts staggered slugs. The case candy includes a custom strap and a sheriff's badge, the latter being a reference to Hynde's favourite cowboy movie, *Appaloosa*.

IN USE

Unusually for a 1965-style neck, our review model features a slab rosewood fingerboard and the profile is slimmer than we'd expect. Somewhere between a C and a very subtle V, it's not exactly a vintage carve but it's a delight to play and we feel an instant bond.

Wear and tear: Ageing on the Fender-branded locking tuners is confined to the adjustment wheels

Metal machine: the aged chrome 'guard complements the faded blue finish

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £1,249 (inc hardshell case)
DESCRIPTION Solidbody electric guitar, made in Mexico
BUILD Alder body with bolt-on maple neck, 7.25" radius rosewood slab fingerboard, 21 vintage tall frets, synthetic bone nut
HARDWARE Hardtail bridge with 6 stainless-steel saddles, deluxe cast/sealed locking tuners
ELECTRONICS 2x Fender Vintage-Style 50s single-coil pickups, master volume and tone controls, 3-way pickup selector
SCALE LENGTH 25.5"/648mm
NECK WIDTH 41.8mm at nut, 51.4mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 19.8mm at first fret, 23.2mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 35.2mm at nut, 54mm at bridge
WEIGHT 3.32kg/7.31lb
LEFT HANDERS No
FINISH Faded Ice Blue Metallic Road Worn nitrocellulose lacquer
CONTACT fender.com

If this is an accurate clone of the neck on Chrissie's guitar, then perhaps hers has a slightly unusual profile for its year – that or it was later finessed by a skilled luthier. Either way, this Telecaster is exceptionally comfortable and easy to play, and boasts tremendous balance and a vintage-style lightness that no doubt contributes to its impressive resonance. Plus, despite a set-up in keeping with Chrissie's avowed vocation as a rhythm guitarist, the 7.25-inch radius is thankfully no impediment to lead playing.

Saddle up: six stainless-steel saddles ensure accurate intonation

Get close: despite its mid-60s stylings, the neck features a slab 'board

On the bridge pickup, you get the slightly percussive but full jangle that differentiates 1960s Telecasters with staggered slugs from the flat-slugged 1950s variety. This guitar's note separation and balance are superb, and we can almost hear a natural chorus effect as we pick through chords.

The low-profile switch tip makes it tricky to flip pickups in a hurry but at least you're less likely to hit it by accident. That said, it's worth the effort, because the neck pickup has a fluty smoothness and plenty of clarity and treble. It may be the chromed scratchplate combining with the cover but it's almost completely noise-free too.

The middle position hollows out the midrange and introduces a wiry quack for yet another fascinating sonic texture. Of course, you could simply bang this guitar onto the back pickup and strum away to your heart's content. But this is capable of more versatile and sophisticated sounds too. Much more than merely a metal pickguard and a paint job, a lot of thought and effort has gone into crafting this signature instrument. The result is a fabulous Telecaster that's hard to fault. G

9/10 **You don't have to be a Pretenders fan to appreciate this stylish twist on the Telecaster theme**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Fender Vintera Road Worn 50s Tele **£999**
Reverend Greg Koch Gristlemaster **£1,299**
LSL Instruments T Bone One **£2,299**

CORT
KX507 MULTI SCALE

WORDS DARRAN CHARLES

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

With fanned-fret guitars more popular and more affordable than ever before, is it finally time for naysayers to take the plunge?

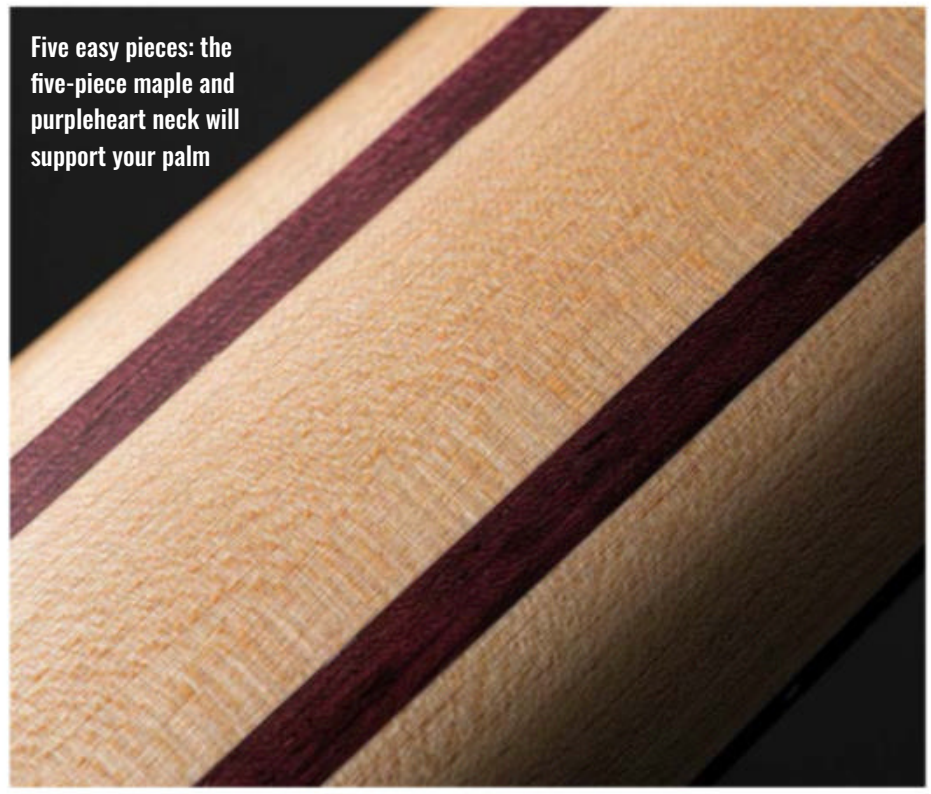
A casual swipe through Instagram should be all the proof you need that fanned-fret and extended-range guitars are much more mainstream these days than they used to be – and that's a fact that clearly hasn't escaped Cort. The Asian mega-manufacturer has overhauled its first seven-string multi-scale behemoth, revamping it for 2021. The KX500MS is dead, long live the KX507 Multi Scale.

Multi-scale guitars may be more visible today but their benefits are still commonly misunderstood. On heavily downtuned or seven- or eight-string guitars with a standard scale length, in order to obviate unpleasant fluctuations in pitch caused by the excessive string vibration, you'll require either a lighter touch or the employment of heavier strings. But there comes a point when ever-thicker strings must suffer from diminishing returns. You'll experience loss of sustain or, worst of all, the string simply becomes too large for the tuning post.

A longer scale length will increase tension, narrow string oscillation and, ultimately, provide more stable tuning. But the downside is that the additional tautness of the treble strings will make expressive lead work difficult. These issues gave birth to the multi-scale concept, whereby lower strings have a progressively longer scale length than their higher-tuned counterparts.

The KX507's stylings may scream teenage angst but the ornamental poplar burl top does add a touch of class to the mahogany body. The neck has a D profile but, as is commonplace on seven- and eight-string guitars, the back is quite flat, even if it's by no means thin.

Diffuse nebula: the Star Dust Green finish gives the poplar burl top a galactic feel



Five easy pieces: the five-piece maple and purpleheart neck will support your palm

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £839
DESCRIPTION 7-string multi-scale electric guitar, made in Indonesia
BUILD Poplar burl top, mahogany body, bolt-on five-piece maple and purpleheart neck with 15.75”/400mm radius macassar ebony fingerboard and 24 frets
HARDWARE Staggered locking tuners, individual hardtail bridge with through-body stringing
ELECTRONICS 2x Fishman Fluence Modern humbuckers, 3-way toggle pickup selector, volume (push/pull to activate voice one or two) and tone (push/pull to activate coil split)
SCALE LENGTH 25.5”/648mm to 27”/689mm
NECK WIDTH 47.4mm at nut, 60.6mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 20.4mm at 1st fret, 22.6mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 63.9mm at bridge, 40.3mm at nut
WEIGHT 3.2kg/7.05lb
LEFT-HANDERS No
FINISHES Star Dust Green (as reviewed), Star Dust Black
CONTACT cortguitars.com

Bridges apart: each of the seven strings has its own individual hardtail bridge unit

Seven wonders: the KX507 boasts staggered locking tuners in black nickel

Modern influence: the Fluence Modern humbuckers are hot with high-gain players

New angle: the macassar ebony 'board features raindrop inlays

Cort has placed the neutral fret – the only fret that's straight and not angled – at the eighth fret, which it claims better sympathises with your natural hand position at both extremities. Despite the accessible price, Cort has continued its commendable habit of appointing name-brand electronics. Here, you'll find Fishman Fluence Modern humbucking pickups, which are becoming the go-to choice for contemporary high-gain players.

IN USE

It never fails to surprise us how little mental acclimatisation is required when switching to a multi-scale guitar. Despite this model suffering from slight neck dive when we strap on, we have no issues traversing the neck at speed and without distraction from unorthodox fret angles. The action is comfortably low and free from fretbuzz, making lead passages a cinch, with the neck carve providing consistent palm-filling support whatever the position.

Each Fishman humbucker features two distinct modes, with the second voice being activated by the push/pull volume knob (coil splits are also available via the push/pull tone control). Both humbuckers shine in their default positions, with the low end judiciously reined in but delivering suitable punch for probing metal riffing. The fidelity and string separation is exemplary, making harmonically dense chordal work possible at even the highest of gain settings, and the aeons-long sustain on offer is sensational – and that's even without huge helpings of amp saturation.

On both pickups, we find the second voice a little uninspiring and watered down compared to the richness of the first. But otherwise, there's very little to fault here. Will this instrument appeal to anyone other than shredders and purveyors of down-tuned metal? Unlikely. But any guitarist wishing to explore the low-end while retaining sonic clarity for expansive rhythm playing will be served very well indeed by this guitar. Long live the KX507. **G**

9/10 **A must-try for down-tuned shredders, with superb definition for high-gain tones**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Schecter Reaper-7 Multi-Scale **£929**
Ibanez RGMS7 Iron Label Multi-Scale **£469**
Strandberg Boden Metal 7 **£1,949**

ATB GUITARS

THE UK'S NO. 1 STOP FOR CLASSIC VINTAGE FENDER AND GIBSON GUITARS

- FENDER & GIBSON -

Wanted!

TOP PRICES PAID

FROM 50'S, 60'S OR 70'S

@ATBGUITARS

1952 GIBSON LES PAUL STANDARD GOLDTOP

FENDER & GIBSON, ACOUSTIC, SEMI & ELECTRIC GUITARS • BASSES • AMPS • PEDALS • ACCESSORIES

15 REGENT ST
CHELTENHAM
GL50 1HE
(BY APPOINTMENT)

T. 01242 697607
E. INFO@ATBGUITARS.COM

WWW.ATBGUITARS.COM

HEISTERCAMP · Thorpy FX · FLOYLEY Guitar & Bass FX Pedals · AIR Est. 2015 · HUDSON · TOASTER CABLES · Ivison Guitars · DanDrive · ORIGIN EFFECTS · BEETRONICS

GRETSCH
G5622 ELECTROMATIC CENTER BLOCK DOUBLE-CUT

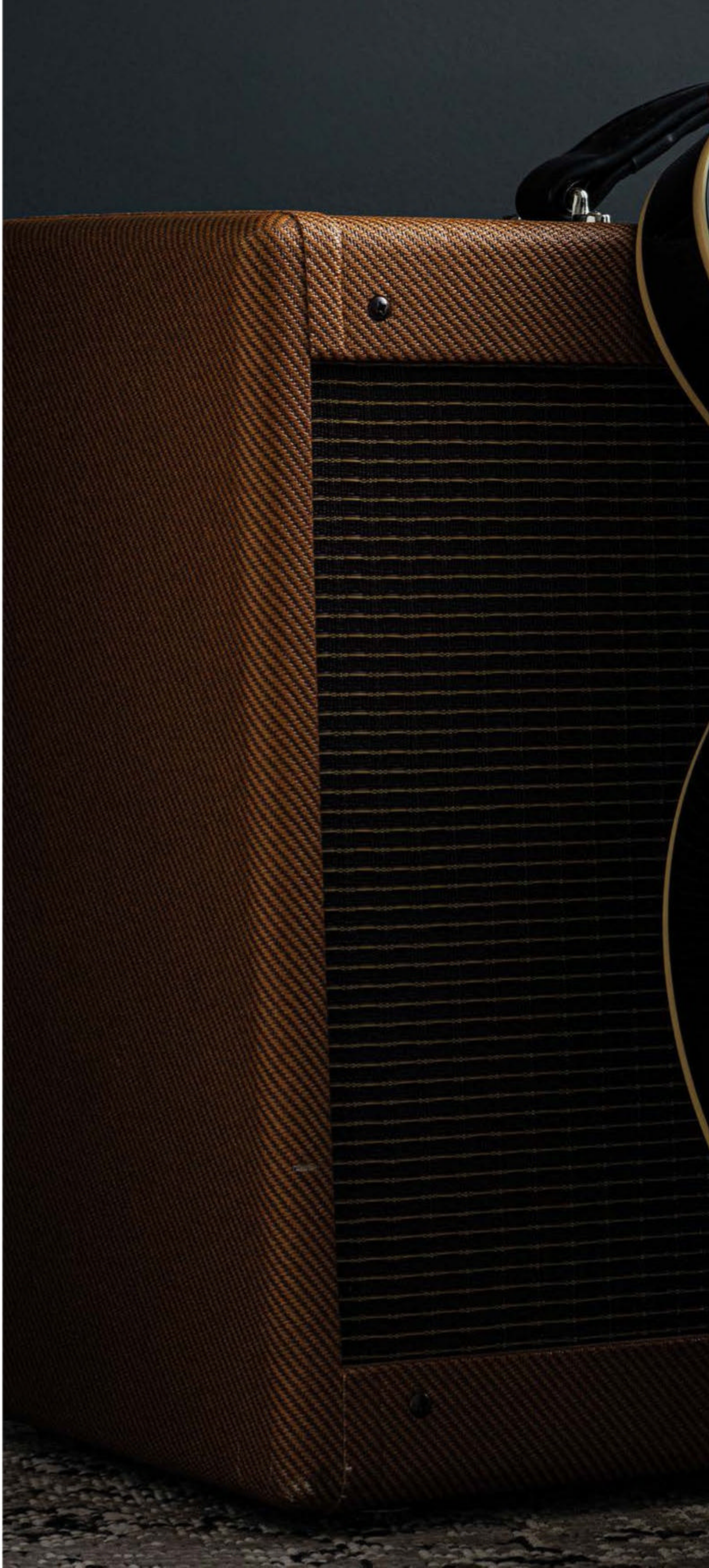
WORDS MICHAEL WATTS

This affordable Gretsch from the Electromatic stable features extra muscle and player-friendly tweaks

There is no denying that the iconic design language synonymous with Gretsch guitars can make for some upsettingly good-looking instruments. In recent years, every tier of the Gretsch catalogue has benefited from sensible upgrades that have seen the playability of these dream machines match up to their stellar tone and aesthetics. New to the Electromatic range for 2021 is this G5622, a double-cut hardtail design that features a chambered spruce centre-block, in a maple body painted in brooding Black Gold and loaded with Black Top Broad'Tron humbuckers.

Giving off strong Country Gentleman vibes, the only immediate clue that this instrument belongs to Gretsch's Chinese-made range is the discreet Electromatic logo that sits on the gold plexi scratchplate. While some of Gretsch's larger hollowbody guitars can feel a little ungainly, the slimline body and the 24.6-inch scale length make for a particularly welcoming squeeze, especially in combination with the lower-profile neck angle. The set 'Thin U' neck profile is tremendously engaging and characterful, and a far cry from some of the more generic shapes coming out of China right now.

The fit and finish of the G5622 is uniformly good too, although there are a couple of untidy spots in the cream binding. The laurel fingerboard certainly looks the part and the pearloid thumbnail position markers are a classic touch. The fretwork, too, is very neat indeed. The hardware is serviceable, with all the pots and switches feeling as solid as you'd hope, and the master volume control is even equipped with a treble-bleed circuit to retain high-end content when you back it off.



GRETSCH
ELECTROMATIC

White knuckle: the G5622's headstock features tasteful aged white binding

In control: vintage-style G-arrow knobs complete the look

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £729
DESCRIPTION 6-string semi-hollow electric guitar, made in China
BUILD Laminated maple body with chambered spruce centre-block, set maple neck with laurel fingerboard, aged white plastic binding, Graph Tech NuBone nut, pearloid Neo-Classic thumbnail inlays, 12" fingerboard radius
HARDWARE Anchored Adjusto-Matic Bridge, Gretsch V-Stoptail tailpiece, die-cast sealed tuners
ELECTRONICS 2x Black Top Broad'Tron humbuckers, 3-position toggle switch, master volume, master tone, individual volume knobs for each pickup
SCALE LENGTH 24.6"/625mm
NECK WIDTH 42.9mm at nut, 53.5mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 20mm at first fret, 23mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 35.5mm at nut, 53mm at bridge
WEIGHT 3.6kg/7.9lb
FINISHES Black Gold (as reviewed), Aged Walnut, Bristol Fog
LEFT-HANDERS No
CONTACT gretschguitars.com

IN USE

It might be argued that a centre-block guitar's raison d'être is to explore the sort of higher-gain stratospheres that would usually cause fully hollow instruments to scream off into uncontrollable feedback. However, though we don't usually require a prompt in order to slam a guitar into a molten tube amp, it would be something of a shame not to explore this instrument's cleaner textures too, because they are particularly promising.

Few guitar companies offer as wide and potentially bewildering a range of pickups as Gretsch. While they display a certain family resemblance, the Black Top Broad'Trons in this guitar have a character that's very different to the flavour that old-school Gretsch players might expect. There is certainly still an element of skinny jangle to be found here when you want it. However, these pokey humbuckers are more PAF-like in terms of response to anything else we've played from Gretsch.

While a Gretsch may not be the obvious choice for jazz, the neck pickup is capable of smooth and pleasing textures for chord and solo work. The middle position has a beautiful breath to it and the bridge pickup's voice has a bluesy edge that works superbly with delay and other temporal effects.

Presented with an angry amp at full chat, the G5622 rises admirably to the challenge, with no loss of either warmth or definition as proceedings get increasingly heated. The bridge pickup is particularly impressive here,

Black beauties: two Black Top Broad'Tron humbuckers give the G5622 a PAF-like edge

Class act: the laurel 'board and pearloid thumbnail markers have a classy, understated look

with a bite to it that gets the point across even through the heavy fuzz of a Wren And Cuff Box Of War.

While there's no danger of a sudden shortage of affordable semi-hollow guitars, the G5622 should definitely be on the radar of any player looking to explore sounds that exist outside of the vintage Gretsch palette. It also looks damn good into the bargain.

8/10 **Vintage aesthetics with a robust sonic twist make this a strong and stylish option for the semi-hollow fan**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Squier Classic Vibe Starcaster **£449**
Epiphone Inspired By Gibson ES-335 Figured **£549**
D'Angelico Premier DC **£699**

MACMULL STINGER

WORDS CHRIS VINNICOMBE

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

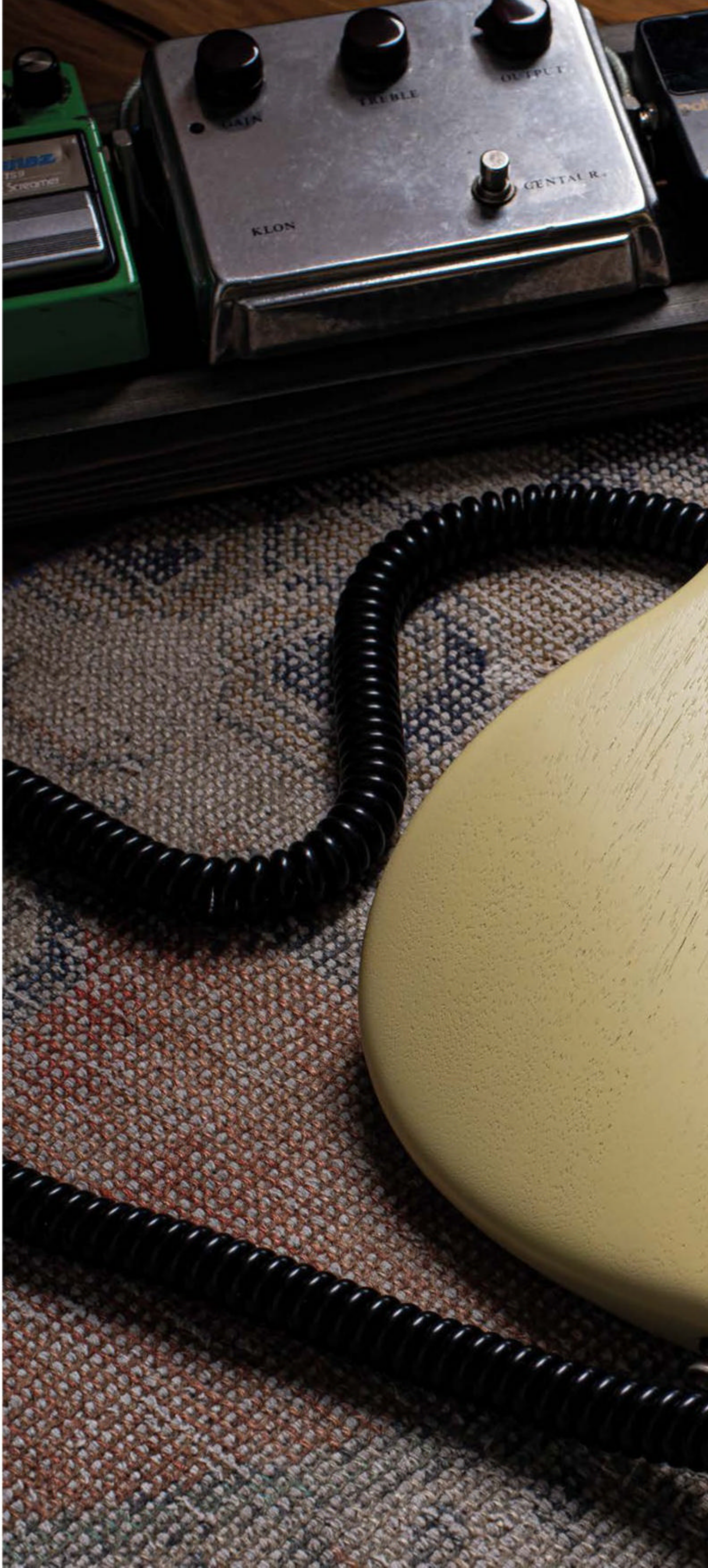
After spending the past decade building some of the world's finest Fender-inspired guitars, Macmull has turned its attention to a new design with Kalamazoo and California in its DNA

We first encountered Macmull Guitars in 2019 and were wowed by the Jerusalem brand's S-Classic and Heartbreaker Custom. These were finely tuned boutique variations on the Strat and Telecaster themes with a quality of tone and feel that lived up to their admittedly high ticket prices. Launched in October 2020, the Stinger is a Macmull model with a difference. A compact, original design, it's described as a "workhorse" and comes at a more accessible price-point than the company's other instruments.

It might be more affordable than its stablemates but the Stinger still benefits from Macmull's RVT (Real Vintage Tone) system, which sees grain, weight, age when cut, moisture levels and frequency response all taken into consideration when matching bodies and necks. Even the electronic components are selected with the stated aim of retaining the wood's "basic predicted sound". As Macmull's Sharon Levi tells us, "Just like choosing the right mic for a specific person, we match the pickup set to each guitar individually."

In the Stinger's case, carefully chosen wood includes a lightweight black limba body with a thin coat of satin nitrocellulose, through which you can see and feel the grain. This is paired with an oil-finished, oval C-shaped maple bolt-on neck with a Madagascar rosewood fingerboard. The smooth satin theme even carries over to the four-ply red faux-tortoiseshell pickguard.

If you're unfamiliar with black limba, you'll likely know it by another name: korina. Along with the P-90 pickups, the use of this wood is one of several design cues that nods towards Gibson. Fender's influence, meanwhile, is represented by the neck construction and 'chopped Tele' bridge, with its etched logo and trio of brass barrel saddles.



Take stock: the Stinger boasts Macmull's Americana headstock design

Smooth sailing: Madagascar rosewood and rolled edges make for a welcoming 'board

With rounded horns, Strat-style forearm and ribcage contouring, and heavily radiused edges, the compact body is snug and approachable. If you do most of your playing in front of a computer – as many of us do these days – its proportions are ideal. The satin surfaces and softened edges give the Stinger a seriously inviting feel, which extends to the heavily rolled fingerboard edges.

On our review model, factory ageing is light and limited to the metal parts. But it likely won't be long before this thin Vintage White finish acquires its own unique patina. Should you want that playwear to be given a head start, several levels of aged finish are available for no upcharge, while full gloss and numerous other options are also on Macmull's custom order menu.

KEY FEATURES

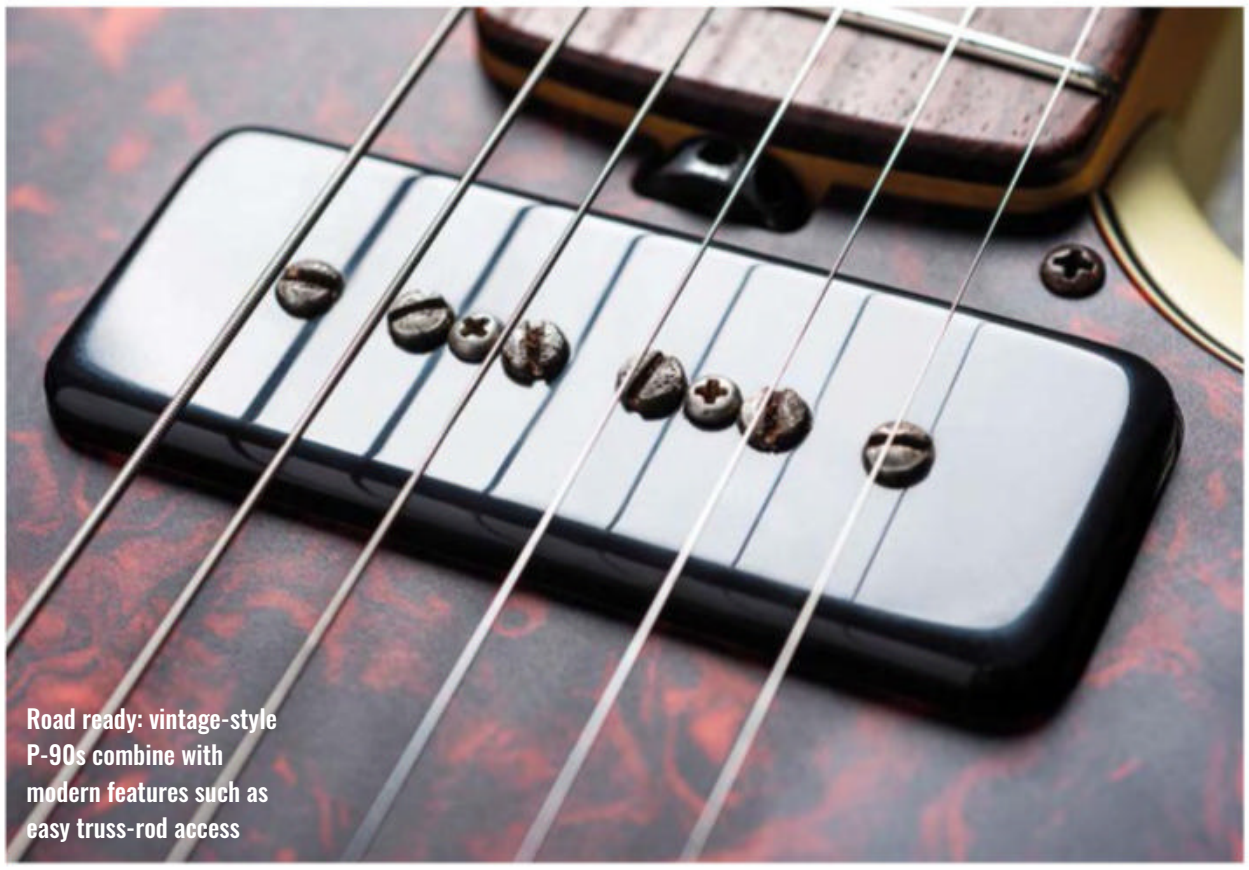
PRICE £2,620 (inc Mono M80 gigbag)
DESCRIPTION Solidbody electric guitar, made in Israel
BUILD Black limba body, bolt-on maple neck with 12" radius Madagascar rosewood slab fingerboard, 21 Jescar 47090 medium frets, bone nut
HARDWARE Macmull Stinger bridge with 3x brass saddles, Kluson vintage-style tuners with white plastic buttons
ELECTRONICS 2x RVT Matched P-90 pickups and CTS volume and tone pots, Luxe Radio .022mF Bumble Bee tone capacitor, Switchcraft 3-way toggle pickup selector switch
SCALE LENGTH 25.5"/648mm
NECK WIDTH 41.3mm at nut, 51.5mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 20.5mm at first fret, 24.1mm at 12th fret
STRING SPACING 34.0mm at nut, 55.5mm at bridge
WEIGHT 3.1kg/7.0lb
OPTIONS See website for multiple custom options, including aged and gloss finishes, headstock finishes, neck profiles, fingerboard material, nut width, fretwire and more
FINISH Vintage White satin nitrocellulose
CONTACT macmull-guitars.com, renegadeguitarco.com

IN USE

We've remarked many times before that there are fewer more versatile or more satisfying combinations in a luthier's playbook than a pair of vintage-style P-90s screwed into a body fashioned either from lightweight mahogany or a material with mahogany-like properties. The Stinger's weight, acoustic response and resonance is very promising and, upon plugging in, it's immediately comfortable in P-90 Les Paul and SG Special territory.

Dial in some tweedy grind and there's so much scope for expression. All manner of Americana and vintage rock palates are catered for and the needle flickers between clean and mean depending on the intensity

Sting in the tail: the three-saddle bridge lends the Stinger a Californian twang, but we didn't experience intonation issues



Road ready: vintage-style P-90s combine with modern features such as easy truss-rod access

of your picking hand attack. If you enjoy plenty of dynamic range under your fingers, you'll quickly fall in love with this guitar.

Inevitably, the bolt-on neck and the Telecaster-style bridge lend the Stinger's accent a certain Californian twang. This guitar is exceptionally rich in harmonics, and there's a springiness to the neck and middle positions, as well as a bite at the bridge, that you simply won't get from the aforementioned Gibson set-neck designs.

In many ways, it's a best-of-both-worlds situation. You'll find Hendrix, Mayer, Townshend and Gibbons tones here in one supremely comfortable machine, and the snappy attack gives way to smooth, even and lengthy sustain. This blend is a boon for emotive lead work and it means the Stinger is as well suited to floating like a butterfly on gentle waves of ambience as it is swathed in the buzz of rock overdrive.

There's no treble-bleed circuit, so rolling back the volume darkens the tone. Like an SG Special, the Stinger begins to hollow out as it cleans up, revealing some of that pseudo-acoustic character typical of vintage P-90s. The tone control is a useful weapon when playing with gain and its well-judged taper means you can cruise along at around six, then open it up wide for a subtle treble uplift for riffs and solos.

Is there anything we don't like? Well, when you take the Stinger out from behind a desk and into a rehearsal room, there's a little neck dive on a strap, and the body would need to be at least 15 per cent bigger in every direction to better suit our 6'2" frame. Nevertheless, we expect the Stinger to be a smash-hit with boutique guitar fans – and we can't wait to see what Macmull does next.

9/10 **Ergonomically and sonically, this is an exceptional solidbody design**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Nik Huber Piet from **€2,995**
Novo Serus T from **$2,799**
Bunting Spiro **$3,100**

String theory: the BT-258E is an eight-string baritone boasting octave pairs on the third and fourth strings

GUILD
BT-258E DELUXE BARITONE

WORDS MICHAEL WATTS

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

Combining a jumbo body with a 27-inch scale length and eight strings, this affordable new model promises to be something of a cannon

For 2021, acoustic grand marque Guild has added a pair of baritones to its affordable California-designed and Asia-made Westerly Collection. Both are based around Guild's much-loved jumbo body, which debuted on the F-50 in 1954. The BT-240E is a six-string, tuned B-to-B, while our review guitar, the BT-258E, takes things a little further into the realm of the recherché with octave pairs on the third and fourth strings – and why not?

The eight-string baritone (tuned five steps below standard) has been around for a few years now. The design can probably be attributed to Taylor's Baritone-8 but even that model had its roots in 1960s acoustic guitar conversions by players such as Roy Connors of The Highwaymen and Roger McGuinn of The Byrds.

The Guild BT-258E's jumbo body features straight-grained laminated Indian rosewood on its back and sides, with the guitar's curved back made using Guild's long-standing pressing process, which gives it more of an archtop feel against the player's body. We've seen the same approach on Guild 12-strings in the past, with great results, so it will be interesting to find out how it works with the rumble of a baritone.

The X-braced solid Sitka spruce top is lively, with a responsive sweet spot behind the pau ferro bridge hinting at good things to come. When viewed close up, it's not the most beautiful set of spruce we've seen. But at this price point, we're far more interested in sound and feel than we are in nitpicking over cosmetics.

With its 27-inch scale length and 17-inch lower bout, there's no denying that this is a large guitar that could prove an ergonomic challenge to some players, especially when you factor in the 0.016-0.070 undersea telephone cables it comes strung with. However, the slim nut width and friendly C carve of the mahogany neck promise a relatively gentle ride for the fretting hand.

The binding and fretwork on the pau ferro fingerboard are impressively clean, and the bone nut and compensated saddle are well cut. Along with the smooth 16:1 Butterbean open tuners, this means that wrestling this beast to pitch is a thankfully smooth and painless process. There is an off-centre mounted strap button on the neck heel to ensure balance and the guitar comes ready to rock (gently) with an active Guild/Fishman Sonitone GT-1 pickup system, which includes relatively unobtrusive volume and tone controls in the soundhole-mounted preamp. It's all very considered.

IN USE

Given the often unwieldy nature of acoustic baritone guitars and their bass-heavy frequency spectrum, the approach demanded from the player often requires adjustment to prevent sensitively played chords from turning into mush. In the case of this model, even more attention to chord shapes is warranted, with the octave pairs on the third and fourth strings encouraging the sort of voicings most commonly associated with 12-string antics.

While it's certainly possible to wring out some rattling American primitivism and Delta blues textures from the BT-258E, this is not the guitar for nuanced fingerpicking.

Saddle up: the compensated bone saddle sits atop a pau ferro bridge

Eight ball: you'll need a strong grip but chords are rich and sonorous

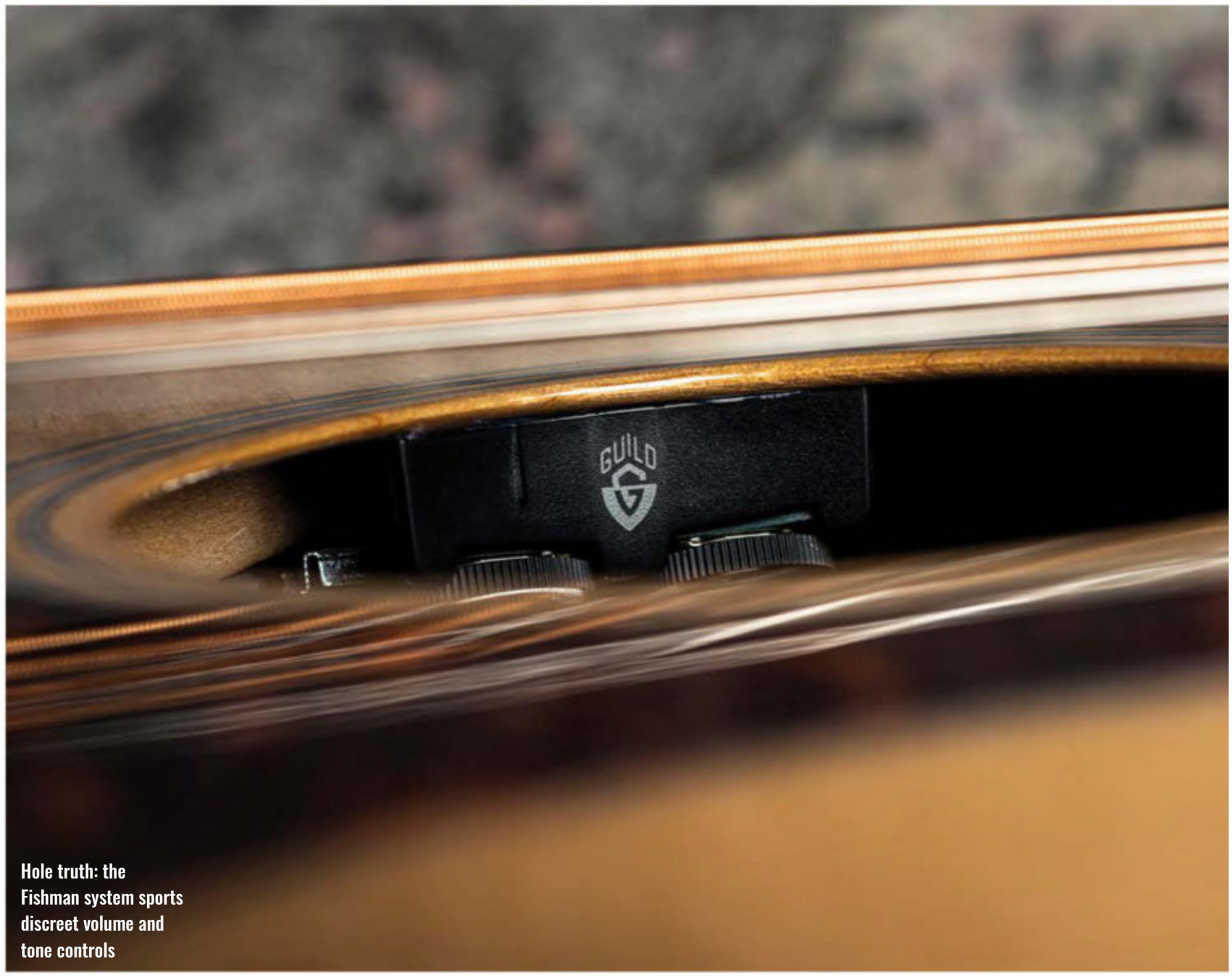
KEY FEATURES

PRICE £549
DESCRIPTION 8-string acoustic baritone guitar, made in China
BUILD Laminated rosewood sides and arched back, solid Sitka spruce top, scalloped X-bracing, mahogany neck, bound 16" (406mm) radius pau ferro fretboard, pau ferro bridge, bone nut and compensated saddle
HARDWARE Nickel Guild GBB1 Butterbean 16:1 tuners
ELECTRONICS Guild/Fishman Sonitone GT-1 pickup system with soundhole-mounted volume and tone controls
SCALE LENGTH 27"/686mm
NECK WIDTH 44.5mm at nut, 56.6mm at 12th fret
NECK DEPTH 20mm at first fret, 24mm at 9th fret
STRING SPACING 38mm at nut, 56.9mm at bridge
WEIGHT 2.3kg/5.0lb
FINISH Natural gloss polyurethane body, satin neck
LEFT-HANDERS No
CONTACT guildguitars.com

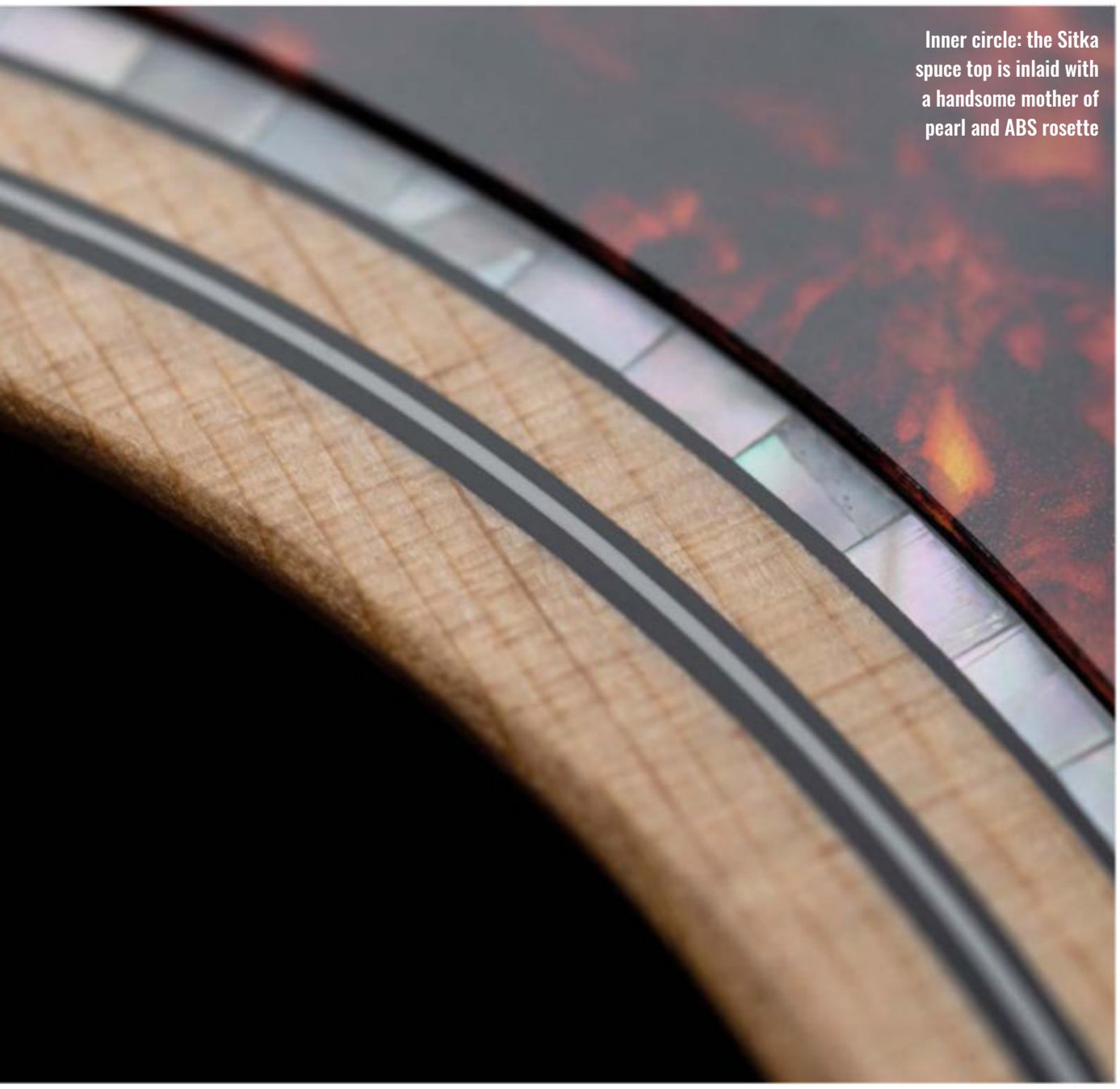
Strings of this weight require a powerful attack to drive them and some distance from the fretboard in which to move effectively and, in conjunction with the longer scale length, even with our battle-hardened calluses, it can be tough going.

That said, it's no more challenging than some of the other baritone guitars, 12-strings and mandocellos that we've grappled with in the search for tonal goodness over the years. Life at these depths demands a strong grip and fingertips of steel, even when supported by the reliable and impressively accurate Fishman pickup system. But the pickup system sure proves a boon, as adding delay, tremolo and reverb to a baritone is about as much fun as anyone is legally allowed to have. If you haven't tried it, you should.

Back in the acoustic realm, more time spent with this guitar confirms our initial suspicions that this is an instrument meant primarily for plectrum players (the large tortoiseshell scratchplate really should've been a giveaway). Adapting our approach and introducing a medium-gauge pick to proceedings brings the BT-258E to growling life, with a rhinocerene bass response that rattles the ribs and brings a huge smile to our face. The shimmering octave textures as we move open chord shapes up and down the neck are also highly musical, and even mundane cowboy chords are so much more interesting when translated to this register and supplemented by the added 12-string-style harmonic sheen that comes from the octave strings.



Hole truth: the Fishman system sports discreet volume and tone controls



Inner circle: the Sitka spuce top is inlaid with a handsome mother of pearl and ABS rosette

Without support from an amplifier, the bass strings can get a little flabby, but you can bring out more articulation with a Wrecking Crew-style tic-tac approach. In a recording context, a blend of both direct and mic'd signals yields the best results for recording convincing basslines.

Perhaps unsurprisingly – and due in no small part to the necessarily high action, long scale length and string gauge – the plain first and second strings can be rather difficult to navigate. This is why fan-fret instruments are seen as a solution by so many extended-range players and luthiers, as they allow you to retain the muscular bass of such low-slung tunings while enjoying the benefits of more manageable scale length on the treble strings. That said, if you can get your head and hands around it, you'll find that the BT-258E is an apex predator in the jangle-box jungle that eats 12-string guitars whole. Play to its strengths and you'll find much to love and a deep and woody well of inspiration here.

9/10 **A big guitar with a huge sound and a versatile tonal palette. You'll need strong hands but at this price it's very tempting**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Alvarez Artist ABT60CE8BK **£479**
Faith Neptune Baritone HiGloss **£1,299**
Taylor 316e Baritone-8 LTD **£XXXX**

VOLUME
TONE
DISTORT
CRIMSON
1992 RUSSIA
FUZZ ON
JHS PEDALS
KANSAS CITY USA
VOLUME
TONE
ATTACK
BENDER
1973 LONDON
FUZZ ON
JHS PEDALS
KANSAS CITY USA

JHS PEDALS
LEGENDS OF FUZZ SERIES

WORDS RICHARD PURVIS

As JHS pays tribute to the biggest milestones in fuzz history with remakes of four classic stompers, we find out whether they're as faithful as they seem

When he's not flooding YouTube with comical demos, stompbox history lessons and the occasional musical theatre production, JHS boss Josh Scott (see p58) does indeed still design effects pedals. The Legends Of Fuzz Series comprises four of them – and they're something of a departure for the brand.

Giving more than just a nod to the most important pedals in the evolution of filth, this is a quartet of retro revivals built with varying degrees of historical accuracy, all based on units in Josh's own collection: a 1969 Arbiter Fuzz Face; a 1972 Univox Super-Fuzz; a 1973 Sola Sound Tone Bender MkIII; and an ultra-rare 1992 Sovtek Red Army Overdrive, one of the very first Russian-made Big Muffs.

Rather than styling each of the models individually, JHS has dressed the range in a matching look borrowed from a stompbox that's much older than any of these revived models: the revolutionary wedge that was the 1962 Maestro Fuzz-Tone FZ-1. That means that the control knobs are sat on the top edge, alongside the jack sockets, which is handy for avoiding accidental kicks but not so much for reading settings.

You can opt for vintage-correct PP3 battery power instead of using your usual mains adapter, which brings us to a fun feature of that wedge design: access to the inside comes via loosening two of the four side-mounted screws and flipping the unit open like the mouth of a robot whale. It's hard to say how mechanically robust this system is but it's not likely to be used often enough for wear to be an issue.

These are not meant to be 100 per cent accurate clones. They're built with modern PCBs for a start and, for reliability, the Bender uses "carefully chosen" silicon instead of germanium transistors. Perhaps most significantly, each pedal features an added push-button switch on the side – the Supreme has two – for extra tonal options.

Given that Josh Scott's latest sideline is penning a column for these very pages, these pedals had better be good or this could get a little awkward…

IN USE

The first Fuzz Faces were based on germanium transistors and some purists will always rue the switch to silicon. But let's not worry about that. After all, Hendrix didn't seem to mind. The Smiley, then, is claimed to be a "sonically faithful recreation" of an early silicon Fuzz Face.

There's nothing in the sound of this unit that leads us to question that claim. Its core sound is fat and fluffy, with loads of boopy sustain and a dramatic softening of the high-frequency transients. Simple chords ring out with gurgling grandeur and it sounds just as good running through a clean amp as through an already crunchy one.

A nudge back on the guitar's volume brings a much cleaner and leaner sound, just as it should, although this doesn't work so well when the fuzz control is cranked for maximum splat. And there's one more vintage-correct feature: pull that guitar volume right down to zero and the circuit responds with a sudden upturn in hiss, squeal and random blasts of Spanish talk radio. It's strangely reassuring.

We're not quite so charmed by the mode switch, which is something of a blunt instrument in terms of voltage-starved gating effects. It can be cool when used in moderation but it would be nice to have some control over just how brutally it chops down on decaying notes.

Next up is the Supreme, which we're told is an exact replica of Josh's favourite Super-Fuzz. Originating in Japan, this is an octave fuzz in the style of the Roger Mayer Octavia; the JHS version adds mid-cut and mid-boost options to the Univox circuit via those side-mounted push-buttons.

This pedal swaps the Smiley's mellow EQ profile for something with considerably more rasp, with an up-octave effect that's mostly textural but certainly plays its part in upping the anarchy quotient. The gain range runs from fuzzy-but-tight to downright chaotic.

The two buttons add real value to this one. The tone button represents the nuclear option, as it scoops all the woodiness out of the sound for something much more mean and contemporary. Meanwhile, the mode button has very little effect on its own but, with the other circuit modification already activated, it's a useful way of bringing back some midrange punch without compromising on that nastiness.

Now we come to the Bender, which might just be our favourite of the four. Many Tone Bender fanatics seem to prefer the earlier versions. But even with its silicon transistors, this is one hell of an advert for the MkIII (which was the first to get a tone control). It's much more solid in tone than the Smiley, while sporting just as much charm in its thick-grained fuzz but without the danger of ever falling into the realms of woolliness.

Attack mode: max out the Bender's attack control for a powerful sound

Reign supreme: the Supreme is the only pedal in the series to have two buttons

KEY FEATURES

JHS LEGENDS OF FUZZ SMILEY
PRICE £179
DESCRIPTION Fuzz pedal, made in the USA
CONTROLS Volume, fuzz, mode switch (for gated fuzz)
FEATURES True bypass, powered by 9-volt mains supply (not supplied) or battery
DIMENSIONS 152 x 98 x 53mm
CONTACT jhspedals.info

8/10 **Does everything you could ask of a Fuzz Face plus a little bit more**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Analog Man Sun Face **$185**
Jim Dunlop Fuzz Face **£127**
MXR Classic 108 Fuzz Mini **£99**

Best of all, the Bender is a deceptively versatile pedal. It's powerful but manageable with the attack (fuzz) control maxed out, and every bit as likeable at minimum; the tone control doesn't add much pure treble but allows you to colour the midrange; and the red button gives a bit of extra bite to the upper mids. It can even cool down to a decent low-gain overdrive sound with the guitar volume backed off.

Finally, it's Big Muff time. But does this unit justify its existence? Just about every variant of this legendary pedal has already been revived by one boutique maker or another, prompting Electro-Harmonix to dramatically up its own Muff game in recent years. How unique can this one be?

Well, it certainly sounds like a Russian Big Muff. That is to say that it's massive and creamy and sustains like a whole string section, not just a violin, but does so with a barking ferocity that's rather un-American. So far, so familiar. But there's a flutey clarity to the top end that makes our reissue 'Civil War' Muff sound ever so slightly crude in comparison. Again the mode button adds some midrange punch but there are no real surprises here. Like all of the pedals in this series, it's a respectful tribute from a true fuzz geek.

Top notch: the control knobs are situated adjacent to the jack sockets

KEY FEATURES

JHS LEGENDS OF FUZZ SUPREME
PRICE £179
DESCRIPTION Fuzz pedal, made in the USA
CONTROLS Volume, expand (fuzz), tone switch (for mid scoop), mode switch (for mid boost)
FEATURES True bypass, powered by 9-volt mains supply (not supplied) or battery
DIMENSIONS 152 x 98 x 53mm

8/10 **The most uncompromisingly fiery model in the series is a lot of fun**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Warm Audio Foxy Tone Box **€179**
Danelectro 3699 Fuzz **£189**
Teisco Fuzz **£110**

KEY FEATURES

JHS LEGENDS OF FUZZ BENDER
PRICE £179
DESCRIPTION Fuzz pedal, made in the USA
CONTROLS Volume, tone, attack (fuzz), mode switch (for mid boost)
FEATURES True bypass, powered by 9-volt mains supply (not supplied) or battery
DIMENSIONS 152 x 98 x 53mm

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

9/10 **A surprisingly broad palette of beautifully rich Tone Bender sounds**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

King Tone MiniFuzz **£259**
Reeves Electro Black Hat Sound **£239**
Sola Sound Tone Bender MkIV **£479**

KEY FEATURES

JHS LEGENDS OF FUZZ CRIMSON
PRICE £179
DESCRIPTION Fuzz pedal, made in USA
CONTROLS Volume, tone, distort, mode switch (for mid boost)
FEATURES True bypass, powered by 9-volt mains supply (not supplied) or battery
DIMENSIONS 152 x 98 x 53mm

8/10 **A tasty take on this season's must-have fuzz accessory, the Russian Muff**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Electro-Harmonix Green Russian Big Muff Pi **£75**
Way Huge Smalls Russian Pickle **£125**
Wren And Cuff Small Foot Box Of War **$200**

BENSON AMPS
GERMANIUM FUZZ

WORDS MICHAEL WATTS

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

Love the sound of germanium fuzz pedals but deterred by the erratic way they respond to temperature extremes? This is just the fuzz for you

Oregon's Chris Benson is personally responsible for some of the most intriguing boutique amp designs we've seen and heard in recent years, with his gorgeous boxes having found favour with a new generation of guitar heroes, from the likes of Kirk Fletcher and Mason Stoops to Celisse and VAVÁ. Benson recently launched a range of guitar pedals too, the first of which, the Preamp, was met with serious enthusiasm. Now he's back with a stompbox that promises to make the most notorious and temperamental fuzz textures a consistent and reliable joy.

While they have featured on myriad classic recordings, germanium-based fuzz circuits are susceptible to changes in temperature and can be very fussy about where you put them in your signal chain. If you've ever used an old germanium fuzz pedal at an outdoor show in the summer, then you'll know that the heat from direct sunlight can have a decidedly negative impact on your tone.

The Benson Germanium Fuzz is equipped with a pair of 2N527 or 2N404 germanium transistors and features a nifty temperature-regulation system based on a solid-state thermostat with an LED that changes colour, turning from amber to green when the warmer is off because the correct bias and hFE (transistor gain) have been set. You can expect the LED to change colour every so often when the unit is in operation too. Benson says that, while it's designed to operate between freezing and 100°F, it may still sound fine outside this range.

If you have a Benson Germanium Fuzz and intend to use it on your forthcoming tour of Death Valley and Antarctic research stations, please do write in and let us know how it fares.

As if all this high-end thermal technology wasn't clever enough, the Germanium Fuzz has another ace up its sleeve. In order to keep this stompbox happy and make sure it plays nicely with all your other pedals no matter where it sits on your board, Benson has also added a class A buffer that feeds a passive guitar pickup simulator. There's also an impedance control that simulates the coveted sound of rolling back your guitar's volume knob, without having to adjust the volume on your instrument.

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £299
DESCRIPTION Germanium fuzz pedal with thermal bias technology, made in the USA
CONTROLS Volume, gain, impedance, on/off footswitch, 9V centre negative power input only, internal trim (set at the factory by Benson – do not touch as it will void your warranty!)
DIMENSIONS 120mm x 48.6mm x 92.5mm
CONTACT bensonamps.com

IN USE

Parking the Germanium Fuzz at the end of our chain with the volume and gain at noon and the impedance rolled off, we tap in and wait a moment for the LED to turn from orange to green. The first powerchords with a Trussart Deluxe Steelcaster are revelatory. While the pedal market's seemingly endless procession of boutique fuzzes is enough to make even the most filth-hungry among us feel jaded, units like this ensure that the day we get tired of a great fuzz will never come.

With this pedal, Benson offers a musical take on a remarkable range of textures. It does a superb high-gain fuzz sound that's more reminiscent of rarefied boutique classics such as the Black Arts Pharaoh than yet another Muff clone. But where the Benson truly excels is in the mid-to-low-gain departments, where there's an almost 3D quality to the super-responsive, dynamic and chewy sounds that emanate from this beautifully thought-out box.

The inherent idiosyncrasies of germanium pedals often mean that the fine line between chicken poop and chicken salad shifts on any given day. In the case of this extraordinary box, it's not just that there are no bad sounds – it's disturbingly good, whatever you throw at it. It's not cheap but, to paraphrase the great Sly Stone, the nicer the nice, the higher the price. And vice versa.

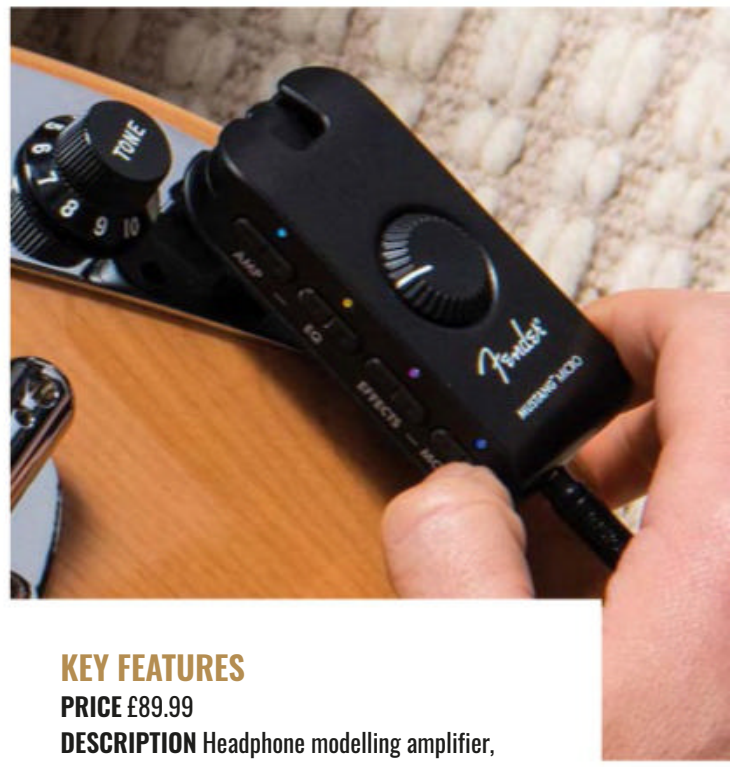
10/10 **One of the best germanium fuzz pedals we've ever tried – it's as simple as that**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Greuter Audio Moonlight Fuzz **£220**
Black Arts Toneworks Pharaoh **£229**
Vemuram Josh Smith Myriad Fuzz **£399**

VOLUME
TONE
TONE
Fender
MUSTANG MICRO

Horse play: the Micro has a fuss-free versatility ideal for home use



KEY FEATURES

PRICE £89.99
DESCRIPTION Headphone modelling amplifier, made in China
CONTROLS Volume, on/off/Bluetooth pairing, amp +/-, EQ +/-, effects +/-, modify +/-
FEATURES Bluetooth audio streaming, USB-C recording/charging out, rechargeable lithium-ion battery (4 hours minimum battery life)
WEIGHT 172g
CONTACT fender.com

FENDER
MUSTANG MICRO

WORDS JOSH GARDNER

Guitar.com EDITOR'S CHOICE

Fender's smallest ever amplifier packs 12 amps and effects into a bijou package in an attempt to be the ultimate low-key amp

Fender's Mustang Micro is the guitar giant's answer to a pressing question in this modern age of everything-all-at-once: how much choice is just enough? Over the years, digital modelling has made traditional practice amps seem needlessly limiting but the option-paralysis brought on by modellers can leave you scrolling through presets endlessly, wasting time that would be better spent playing.

Enter then, the Mustang Micro, Fender's attempt to find a Goldilocks zone between these two extremes – and the magic number appears to be 12. That's 12 classic amp sounds and 12 adjustable effects presets, plus the ability to mix and match amps and effects at your leisure. It's an impressive package for something that's smaller than a pack of cards, even more so given the inclusion of Bluetooth music streaming and the ability to record directly to your DAW via USB-C, all for under a hundred quid.

IN USE

Simplicity and utility are the order of the day with the Mustang Micro. Its matte black design is a little bland but the build feels both sturdy and lightweight, and thanks to the adjustable jack socket, it plugs in easily to every electric guitar we have to hand. Plugging in a set of wired 3.5mm headphones (unfortunately Bluetooth 'phones are a no-go due to latency) and switching the unit on, we're greeted with the familiar sound of a '65 Twin Reverb paired with tasteful hall reverb and, with a twist of the big master volume knob up top, we're rolling.

Selecting your sound is done via four sets of +/- buttons on the unit's near side, each with a corresponding multi-coloured LED. The amp buttons do what you'd expect, EQ offers five different presets, the effects set is similarly self-explanatory, while modify lets you select from five different effects parameters or switch the effect off entirely. If that seems at all confusing, fret not: the Micro comes with a handy credit-card-sized reference sheet for the amps and effects and their corresponding LED colours. Before long you'll be instinctively pairing the red amp (a '65 Deluxe Reverb) with the cyan effect (a fun stereo delay modelled on the iconic TC 2290) without worrying too much about the details.

All the amps and effects are borrowed from the Micro's big brother, the Mustang GTX – the effects comprise combinations of delays, reverbs and modulations, while the amps run the gamut from classic Vox and Marshall to modern Mesa, EVH and Bogner-inspired models, with a healthy smattering of bona fide Fender emulations thrown in for good measure. There's also an uncoloured direct-to-desk sound that's ideal for bass and acoustic, or for recording into an amp modeller.

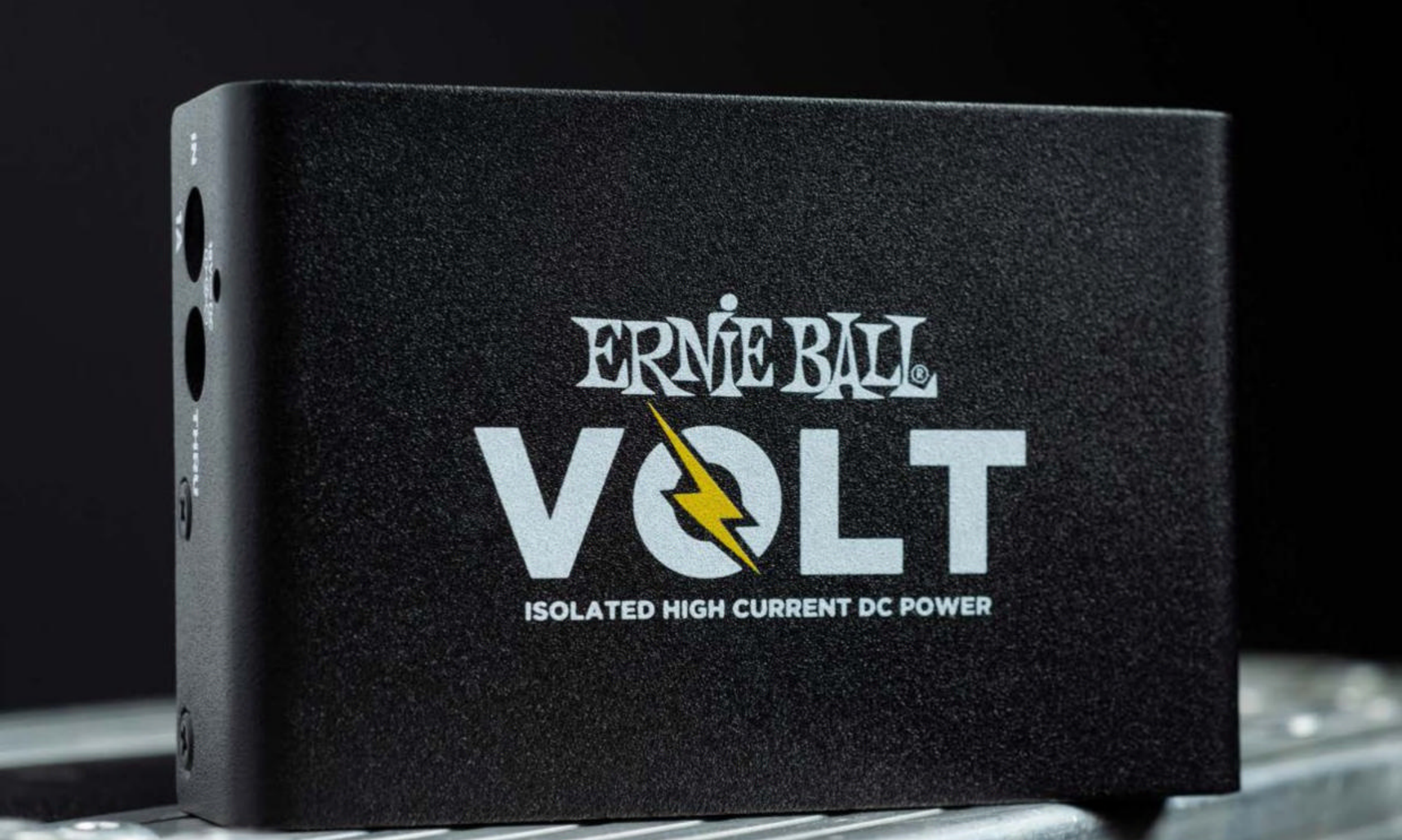
You might have noticed that we haven't mentioned drive – that's because the models cover bases from clean to high-gain but there's no way to tweak the level of drive within each preset. It's a little frustrating if you're used to more tweakability but that's not really the point here. The stated aim is to get you playing along to your favourite songs or backing tracks with minimal fuss and good sound and, in that regard, it succeeds with aplomb. The sounds might be limited but they're all hugely impressive for a unit of this size. Bluetooth pairing is a doddle, and the built-in audio/video sync means latency won't be an issue if you're playing along to lessons.

As a no-fuss home practice tool, a beginner amp, a travel rig or even an emergency pedalboard amp, there's little reason why all of us shouldn't have one of these stowed away in our gigbags.

9/10 **Compact, great-sounding and easy to use, the Mustang Micro might be the perfect no-fuss home practice tool**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Blackstar AmPlug2 Fly **£42**
Boss Waza Air **£378**
Old Blood Noise Endeavours Headphone Amp **£99**



Shock and awe: the Volt is charmingly dainty but punches well above its weight

ERNIE BALL VOLT

WORDS MICHAEL WATTS

Guitar EDITOR'S CHOICE

This pocket-sized power solution from the king of strings will keep your pedalboard fed while keeping noise and fuss to a minimum

There are few sights as joyful to the modern guitar player as a perfectly organised pedalboard. But feeding your precious collection of effects with a reliable source of electricity often presents challenges.

Some isolated power supplies are bulky and heavy, while their daisy-chain-style equivalents are susceptible to extraneous noise and breakage with use. Enter strings and accessory magnate Ernie Ball with a new isolated high-current DC power supply that's compact, simple to use and affordable.

IN USE

There are three important things you should know about the Volt. Firstly, it's practically minuscule by power-supply standards and will fit snugly underneath a Pedaltrain Nano or similarly pint-sized board, where it will happily feed up to five pedals with 300mA of goodness via the supplied cables. Each of its outputs is electronically isolated from the input and other outputs, and comes with an LED indicator that lets you know everything is functioning as it should.

Secondly, while the four main outlets are rated at nine volts, the Thru output adjacent to the input can either supply 18 volts to any standalone pedal that can handle it or be used to power additional Volt units as a solution for larger pedalboards. The Volt will also work worldwide and comes with a selection of lovely prongs to suit plug sockets from Bognor Regis to Beijing.

Finally – and we simply can't stress this enough – the Volt just works extremely well. We assembled a group of our most irritable stompboxes, notoriously fussy vintage and boutique numbers alike, and the Volt tamed the lot of them where other power supplies failed. No noise, no fuss, just all of our pedalboard problems solved.

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £119
DESCRIPTION Isolated high-current DC power supply, made in China
FEATURES 4x 300mA 9v DC centre-negative power outputs. Thru circuit passes 18v from the supplied universal AC adapter and can be used to daisy-chain multiple Volt units. 5x 500mm straight/angled power cables included
DIMENSIONS 89 x 58 x 24mm
WEIGHT 0.25kg/8.8oz
CONTACT ernieball.co.uk

9/10 **Smaller than a packet of strings, this easy-to-use unit truly delivers**

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

T-Rex Fuel Tank Junior **£85**
MXR DC Brick **£89**
Strymon Ojai **£149**

CODAMUSIC

www.coda-music.com

Fano Omnis now in stock

51a High Street, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 3AH t: 01438 350 815 e: stevenage@coda-music.co.uk
Acoustic Centre 27b Church Lane, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 3QW t: 01438 350815 e: acoustics@coda-music.com

Instant decision 9 months 0% finance
available on all new products over £300 on our website

INDUSTRY INSIDER

JAMES' HOME OF TONE

INTERVIEW SAM ROBERTS

Since 2015, James Gascoigne has sought to offer something different in a too often impersonal market. From guitars and amps to pedals and parts, his eponymous Stourbridge store boasts a carefully curated selection of niche gear that you won't find elsewhere

How did you get into guitar?

"My dad played classical and had a couple of nylon-string guitars in the house while I was growing up. My personal interests mostly came from the music my family enjoyed. I grew up hearing Pink Floyd, Zappa, Steely Dan, Al Di Meola and, to some extent Clapton, Hendrix and Satriani. A family friend fuelled this further when I was shown his guitars. I remember seeing a black SG and a red Strat and thinking that they were incredibly cool. They interested me way more than the run-of-the-mill kids' hobbies. For my sixth birthday, I got a black Squier Strat, along with the daunting task of figuring out what on earth to do with it. I only began to get to grips with it in my teens, when I began to find musical tastes of my own and found guitar a really helpful tool for expression. At around this time, I began feeling incredibly interested in what effect changing the components can have, why guitars have certain body woods, hardware or pickup specs, and what tone that results in. It's been a slippery slope ever since!"

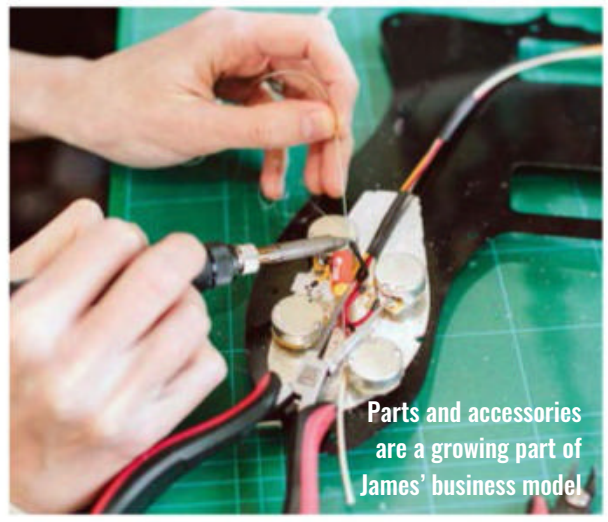
What stands out about your business model?

"The quality of the products offered and the unique nature of many of the brands that I represent plays a big part in what I do, and that's proved to speak for itself, which is fantastic. My ethos from the very beginning has been to stock and represent only the products that I would personally want to own, and that's been helpful in getting noticed and staying afloat in a sea of well-established retailers. I come from a customer service background, prior to establishing the Home Of Tone. All of that came together when I began finding my feet with the service I wanted to provide. I really believe those factors are some of the most important parts of my business model. They're certainly the aspects I get the most feedback about and hopefully I can improve on them as the business continues to grow."

When did you realise you had a viable business?

"It's taken time to experiment with products and the business approach in general. But the most helpful thing early on for me was taking the leap of faith (despite perhaps not being quite ready yet) and exhibiting at The Guitar Show in Birmingham. Despite funds being low and stock being limited, I still worked hard at attending those shows early, on as it gave me an opportunity to get a real feel for what worked and what didn't work, and to gauge the public reaction to the branding and products offered. I'm an introvert, so doing these shows really forced me out of my comfort zone for the good of my business, and I'm glad that I have pushed myself in that regard. One range I've offered since first starting is a selection of pre-wired replacement harnesses and developing those over the years has really proved to be worth all the effort, as they remain a major part of my business and day-to-day work. For the past couple of years, I have focused more on the parts and accessories side of the industry, and that has been the most

James regularly runs relaxed events that facilitate sharing and product feedback



Parts and accessories are a growing part of James' business model

viable for me, and given me hope that the business will be sustainable going forward. It's too easy for parts and accessories to be overlooked, especially when the shiny, new guitars take centre stage, but focusing on parts and accessories has provided me with a viable business that I am incredibly thankful for."

Did you have any external investment starting out?

"I decided not to seek investment when starting. I still worked full-time early on and I just spent whatever I had left after the household bills went out each month on stock, supplies and equipment. Luckily, suppliers and boutique makers believed in my approach, so I was able to obtain some really cool stock as and when I could. I also sold some of my own gear to fund items or batches of stock. Granted, sometimes those were painful sacrifices but I wouldn't expect success for nothing. I'm proud to say that I continued like that for some time. I won't sugar-coat it and say my life transformed overnight because it didn't! It's been gradual growth, a lot of late nights and taking little steps forward as often as I could afford to do so. The downside was that any setbacks hit incredibly hard but I set myself the goal of making this work by the time our son started school and, after a lot of efforts, managed to achieve that."

When did you feel like you'd nailed your branding?

"Setting up a business can be overwhelming for so many reasons but getting the branding right from the get-go carries a lot of pressure, so it was important. About a year or so into the business, I wanted to raise some money for the Mind charity and decided to do so via a limited edition t-shirt release. I approached Kevin Wilson, an illustrator who I'm a huge fan of, to work on a design. Kevin created a logo that I've stuck with ever since, my UFO-inspired logo, which has had such a great response and is memorable too. I've since worked with some other amazing illustrators and designers on variations of this logo and idea concept, which has been great fun!"

How do you continue to develop in today's ever-changing market?

"I think platforms like Instagram and YouTube give you a chance to keep your ear to the ground on any shifting trends, so I've subconsciously found that to be an incredibly useful tool. Truthfully, I just go with what inspires me, whether that's brands, products or players, as well as factors from outside the guitar industry and how they approach their business. I'm lucky to already work with so many great forward-thinking brands that it keeps me moving forward but, at the end of the day, I'm a long-term guitar obsessive and love the new gear as much as anyone, so the passion drives the development."

What's your proudest moment as a business owner?

"Some of my favourite moments since starting are some of the events that I've organised. These have been non-profit events raising awareness and money for charity, and the response continues to blow me away. There have been gigs and morning get-togethers, where luthiers come and share their work in a relaxed atmosphere. It has been humbling to see the turnout. That said, being able to support my family via a business I've established from the ground up is the proudest of all. Seeing some of my products featured in this mag has been humbling too. I'd buy the magazines every month growing up. Seeing my name on a page brings it full circle!"

What are the biggest opportunities for the guitar industry in 2021?

"I hope that those who picked up an instrument for the first time through 2020 continue with the passion we all have for our beloved instrument. Perhaps when gigging can return, it will spark more interest in open-mic nights and local bands, or at least further the respect for performers. It's been incredible to see so many people tackling home builds and learning more about the inner workings of the guitar. That's such an awesome opportunity for the parts side of the industry, especially with the ever-growing popularity of modding more affordable, lower-budget instruments. It's safe to say that the modding and boutique builder community has influenced the bigger-name brands. The DIY world is very healthy indeed and the variety of parts available should certainly reflect that in the coming year."

What's next for James' Home Of Tone?

"I'm always looking to improve the brand selection and stock levels, so that's continually at the forefront of my growth. One by-product of establishing the Home Of Tone as a place for cool gear is that it's important for me to keep that going and help promote more brands making that cool gear! Perhaps even some new Home Of Tone-branded gear too."

For more visit homeoftone.co.uk

SHOP TALK

BARRY GRZEBIK
GREZ GUITARS

WORDS DAVE HUNTER
PHOTOGRAPHY GREZ GUITARS

A successful career in sound-system design and acoustical engineering might seem like the long way round into guitar making. But it all kind of makes sense when high-end electric and flat-top acoustic instruments are the goal

Given the fervent reappreciation of upcycled catalogue-inspired guitars these past few years, Grez guitars are well positioned to soar in the current marketplace – and the man behind them, Barry Grzebik, is primed to help them do so.

In addition to redwood-topped flat-top acoustics and custom-spec archtops, Grez's best-known guitars are likely those inspired by the simple retro styling of a Harmony Stratotone Jupiter or a Silvertone Speed Demon, but rendered with the utmost consideration for resonance, playability, components and overall quality of construction. As Grzebik himself puts it: "I want to make a high-quality, beautiful instrument but I feel like it's a bit of a working man's instrument too. It doesn't aspire to be in a museum. It's going to be on stage. I think that comes from me working with musicians and sound engineers, and tours and live TV. You know, you make tools. It's just sort of how I came up, I designed tools to get things done."

SOUND DESIGN

After spending much of his youth in New Jersey, Grzebik moved to Northern California with his family at the age of 15, and has called the region home ever since. Obsessed with music in general and sound in particular as a teen, he forged a career in the live sound industry, working as a product designer for Apogee. Not only did the position see him designing loudspeakers, amps and equalisers for massive commercial PA systems, it took him all over the world, overseeing installations for events such as the Grammy Awards, the Oscars and the Olympics, as well as Broadway shows.

"What happened was sort of fortunate for me, I guess," says Grzebik. "Right place at the right time. You'd make these big sales to a performing arts centre or someplace somewhere in the world, so I got to show up at all kinds of interesting events. I did that for a long time and eventually became director of engineering at that company, and then we sold the company and I started a consulting firm. And I've been an acoustical consultant for a long time, as a kind of parallel path.

Barry Grzebik with a Grez Mendocino at his shop in Petaluma, Northern California

"If you make speakers for a living, people ask you, 'What speaker should I use? Where should I put it? Does this sound right?' And eventually you realise that you can make a living telling people what to do, and not have to make the stuff. Because manufacturing can be a bit of a pain, having a factory full of people and parts. I knew I didn't want to start another speaker company. That's just way too big of an investment to start up in this climate. Instead of needing $10,000, you need $10m if you want to start a real speaker company and be competitive. Too much hassle – investors, board of directors – and none of it's any fun."

Despite all the rational thinking, however, Grzebik still had a burning desire to make something, and it looked more and more like that something would be guitars. Without the foundation that comes with the common path – build guitar in high-school wood shop, study woodworking, obtain apprenticeship, launch your own brand – Grzebik found himself starting essentially from scratch, entering what he calls his "third career" in early middle age.

"It just started out, you know," he says. "The first year I just studied the topic intently: bought every book, watched every video, read every article. Just studied for a year. Then, the second year, I built one acoustic guitar, which is kind of an accomplishment as a personal thing but, you know, it's not much in the industry [laughs]. Eventually you build some more, and a website goes up and people start buying them, and here we are, struggling to keep up with sales!"

ACOUSTICAL ENGINEERING

While this is a challenging industry for anyone to get into, Grzebik had a leg up in his deep understanding of acoustic principles and product design in general.

Which is to say that, once the project got serious, he wasn't just building guitars for the sake of it but was building them to sound great.

"We all know that whether it's being a musician or making guitars, this is not where you go to make a fabulous living," he concedes. "It's where you go because you're enjoying yourself and you're enjoying your co-workers and your peers, and it's just a good place to be. And hopefully you can make a living at it somehow."

Grzebik's in-depth knowledge meant that he was always going to reach beyond building guitars just for fun. "I'm a product designer," he says. "I know about materials and sound, and being an acoustician and designing loudspeakers. Not that I have a 'golden ear' – that's something you put in air quotes – but I have 'an ear' at least. I've made a living listening to things and I know what sounds good and what doesn't. Not just to me. I've made things other people think sound good. So, for instance, if you're designing a woofer, right? You're looking at the cone, you're deciding how stiff it is, how much it weighs. If you're designing an acoustic guitar, you're looking at the top and talking about how stiff it is, and how much it weighs… you know, there's just so much that overlaps."

Even so, coming at it through the consideration and application of sound waves and acoustic principles rather than of woodworking and construction put Grzebik one a different path into the craft, and most would agree that it shows in the final results.

"It's tricky," he says, "because, if you come up through the normal channels, you're aspiring to be, I don't know, John Monteleone or Linda Manzer, the top of the triangle – you're learning and you're honing your skills to be able to make the perfect miter joint or whatever. All of that's great but, to me, that's heading toward art guitars, and I've never been excited about the high art of it so much as the functionality of it."

The semi-hollow Mendocino features a Honduran mahogany body with an old-growth redwood top, while the solidbody Folsom (right) is made from basswood

In taking his rigorous form-follows-function approach, Grzebik has boiled down the essential principles of an acoustically-virtuous guitar – be it an acoustic or an electric instrument – to a certain design simplicity that often belies the level of thought that has gone into the end result. Which, again, is to say that with Grez guitars, there's more going on inside than first meets the eye.

"I don't want things to look high-tech and crazy," he says. "I mean, it can be interesting on the inside but I still like that simple look on the outside. One of the things, for example, about the Mendocino, the way it's designed and the way it's assembled, is that it has very few glue joints in it. You can't tell by looking at it – it's just a guitar. But people obsess about glue, you know? 'Is it hide glue? Is it this glue or that glue?' And that's fine but what if you almost have no glue joints? Then it doesn't matter what kind of glue you use. There's like three glue joints in the whole guitar. That's just like one tiny detail but it's a hidden thing about the instrument that makes it behave, in my opinion, maybe a little better or a little different. But if you look at it, it's just a simple, cleanly designed instrument. The little details that make it sing are not boldly shouting at you, they're hiding in there."

RESTRICTED AIR SPACE

While the Grez Mendocino and aptly named Semi-Hollowbody models sit in a semi-acoustic/semi-hollow category that seems to be enjoying a renaissance, the models arrived there with arguably more consideration to the performance of such an instrument than just any another, slightly differently shaped casting of the old ES-335 mould. Everything in the design – from the materials and the material thicknesses to air space and the body proportions – has been thoroughly thought and re-thought to maximise the potential of this breed of guitar.

“IF IT’S THE MOST PERFECT PIECE OF REDWOOD, IT MAY BE USED FOR ACOUSTIC GUITARS – AND THAT IS STILL WAY ABOVE WHAT SOMEBODY MIGHT CONSIDER FURNITURE-GRADE”

This special-edition Bigsby-equipped Smugglers Bridge Folsom is made from a single piece of redwood salvaged from Smugglers Bridge in Humbolt County, California. Before its 100-year stint as a bridge, it was a tree for 1,000 years (give or take)

“They’re designed from the ground up to be different,” says Grzebik. “Again, maybe they don’t look entirely different but the construction is different, and the most important way they’re different – which is not revolutionary – is that they’re not laminated wood. This is the kind of material that you’d build an acoustic guitar from: high-quality solid wood. My thought there is that, as the instruments get a little thinner and smaller and have centre-blocks, they begin to resonate less. Traditionally, when smaller-bodied semi-acoustic guitars have centre-blocks, there’s not a lot of air in there, so they’re really not all that lively. First off, just changing to a livelier wood brings a lot of life back to them.”

Grzebik likes to think of it on a spectrum: with the traditional Gibson L-5 archtop acoustic on the fully hollow acoustic end and the Les Paul on the solid end, many people would consider the ES-335 to be right in the middle as the semi-hollow archetype. Except that, as Grzebik is keen to point out, it really isn’t.

“In my opinion, the ES-335 isn’t anywhere near the middle,” he says. “It’s far closer to a Les Paul than an L-5. So my thought was to make a semi-hollowbody guitar that really was in the middle, between an L-5 and a Les Paul. So, if you take the semi-hollowbody and just start by making it from acoustically lively woods, that really helps a lot.

The other thing that would be taken from acoustic guitar building and applied to semi-hollowbodies is that in acoustic building, you’re always flexing the top, right? You’re trying to get it to be either the right stiffness or flexibility for the application. For instance, on a smaller acoustic guitar, you would thin the top more because the top is spanning a smaller distance and you want to maintain a certain flexibility, and if you don’t make the top thinner as the body gets smaller, it actually gets stiffer, which goes against the liveliness that I’m trying to get. So I’m actually thicknessing the tops of these semi-hollowbodies as you’d thickness the top of an acoustic guitar, so that as it gets smaller, it gets thinner, which maintains some liveliness. It doesn’t just become more and more dead as it gets smaller.”

In addition, following the same principles that avoid creating standing-wave-inducing square boxes for recording studios and live performance spaces, Grzebik consciously builds asymmetry into the bodies of the guitars, enabling the bass and treble sides to perform more specifically to their dual purposes.

“The bass side is usually larger and the treble side is smaller, which forces the body to have more complex resonance,” he adds. “I want the bass side to have a certain set of frequencies that are different from the treble side, to try to create something that has a more wide-ranging acoustical palette or voice. From an engineering point of view, it might be referred to as spread resonance, where you have things that resonate at different frequencies and you couple them together and they affect each other.”

GROWING OLD

Whatever the engineering considerations, so much of any guitar's ultimate performance comes down to the raw materials and, like most considerate makers, Grzebik puts a lot of thought into his wood selection. In that vein, he's also particularly noted for tapping one of Northern California's great natural resources, though purely in an environmentally conscious and secondhand manner.

"I definitely am a big user of Honduran mahogany still," he begins. "And I know that's something that may have to change down the road but, for the moment, I'm still using a lot. My necks are one-piece Honduran mahogany necks, again going back to fewer glue joints being something I'm interested in, and the same with the Mendocino bodies – Honduran mahogany, for both weight and voicing. But really it's redwood that I use a lot of. That's kind of my schtick I suppose – but it's always salvaged. The closest to new wood that I've ever used is an old tree that came down in a mudslide, that somebody collected and sawed into lumber. But again, it's an old-grown tree. But that's the closest to something living that I've ever had. Most of it takes a pit stop as a building before I get it. Up here in Northern California, 100 years ago, everything was made from redwood, so it's kind of everywhere. It takes some work to seek it out and, just because you find a piece of redwood doesn't mean it's suitable to build a guitar. But at least I have the opportunity to find a good piece."

While many may appreciate the rustic natural beauty of a coarsely grained piece of old-growth redwood, they likely have nowhere near the facility to describe the sound of this less common tonewood than they do that of mahogany, maple or rosewood.

"If you're making a solidbody guitar," explains Grzebik, "we kind of imagine a voice associated with mahogany or a voice associated with maple, which has frequencies that are accentuated by those woods.

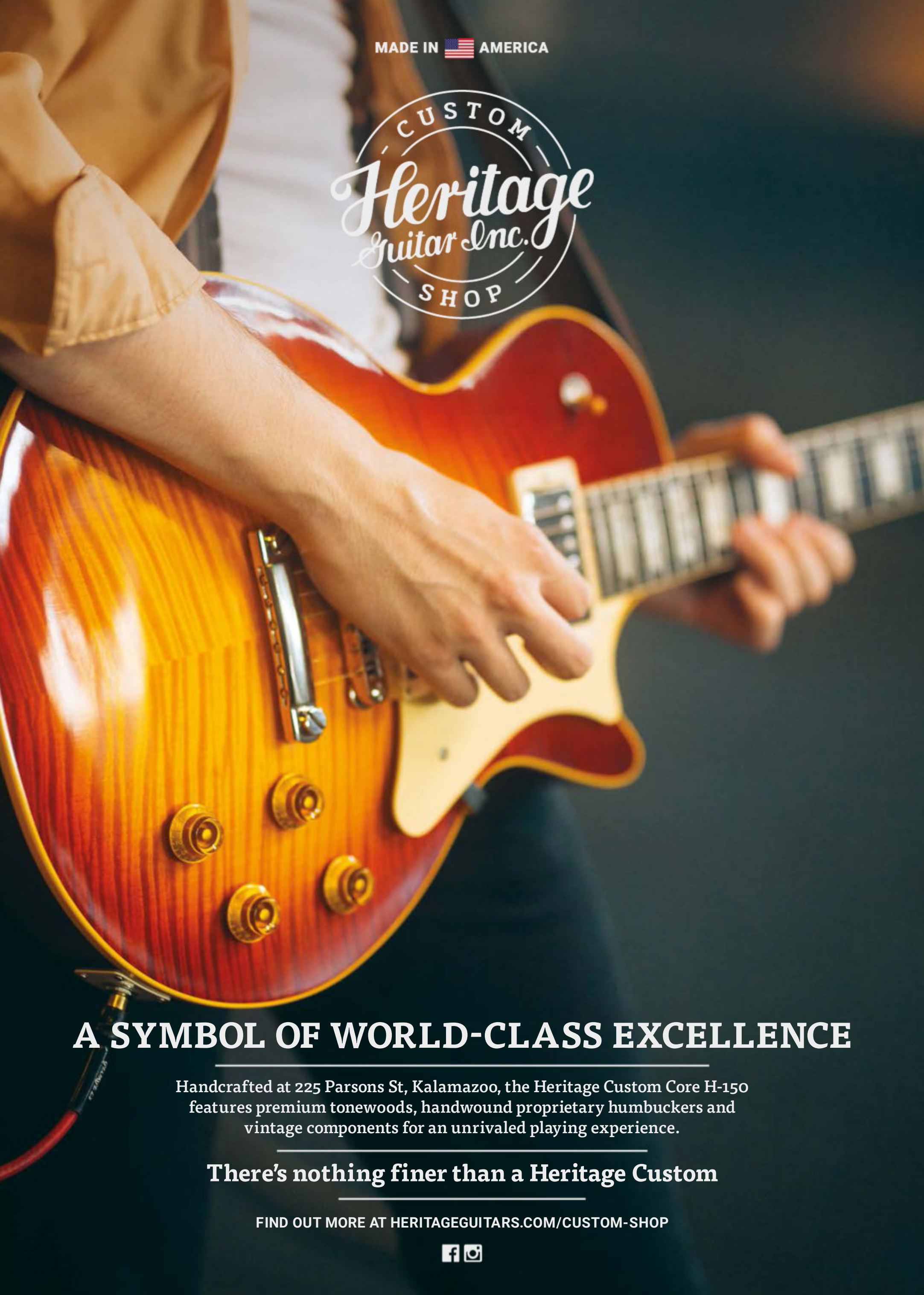
Redwood feels to me to be a bit flatter and quite a bit extended. There's a little more low end and a little more top end, without any peaks in the middle. So it works well for solidbody guitars because it gives you a little of that vibration and liveliness that you get from an old guitar. People associate it with the properties that you get from old wood, because it's so well dried out and the resins have cured fully, and there's a vibrance and a liveliness to a really old piece of wood that redwood seems to have, either because it's just the nature of it being redwood or because it really is an old piece of wood – it's only new to me because I just acquired it. It helps build guitars that, when you pick them up you think, 'Hey, there's something here. This is not just a chunk of wood'. From an acoustic guitar standpoint, if you wanted to compare redwood to spruce or cedar, people will usually say generic things like, 'Oh, it's somewhere in between'. I have generally found that it varies more than those species. So when I get redwood, it's often a matter of grading it. If it's the absolute most perfect piece, it may be used for acoustic guitars, maybe one step down for semi-hollowbody guitars and, a step down from that, solidbody guitars – and all of that is still way above what somebody might consider furniture-grade. For my use, it's got to be first-growth, old-growth redwood, and it's always reclaimed."

In addition, Grzebik carefully selects pickups and hardware to match and complement the properties of the wood, often – though not exclusively – turning to gold foils in the redwood-bodied models because they have a lot of chime and high end, which, for Grzebik, means "a body that's a little warmer to work together with the pickup choice", which makes sense.

Otherwise, while most of the non-vibrato-equipped guitars that populate the standard Grez line-up receive the custom touch of a stylish Grez-branded trapeze tailpiece – made from 12-gauge stainless steel with a laser-cut logo – Grzebik still makes entirely custom guitars on demand. And while these might be bespoke interpretations of any of his other models, they take the form of the hollowbody archtop electric designs that Grez took on from the late builder RC Allen, who made guitars for Hank Thompson, Merle Travis, Joe Maphis and others.

"RC Allen had been making guitars since the 1950s," says Grzebik, "and he kind of hung out in the shop with Paul Bigsby and John Dopyera from the Dobro fame, and so he built everything from Bigsby-style guitars and banjos to archtop guitars, ukuleles, whatever, everything. When he passed away, I managed to get these tools from his shop through Deke Dickerson, a long-time friend, and started building archtops. It's an interesting thing. I don't think I would be building archtops had that not fallen into my lap."

Visit grezguitars.com for more



A SYMBOL OF WORLD-CLASS EXCELLENCE

Handcrafted at 225 Parsons St, Kalamazoo, the Heritage Custom Core H-150 features premium tonewoods, handwound proprietary humbuckers and vintage components for an unrivaled playing experience.

There's nothing finer than a Heritage Custom

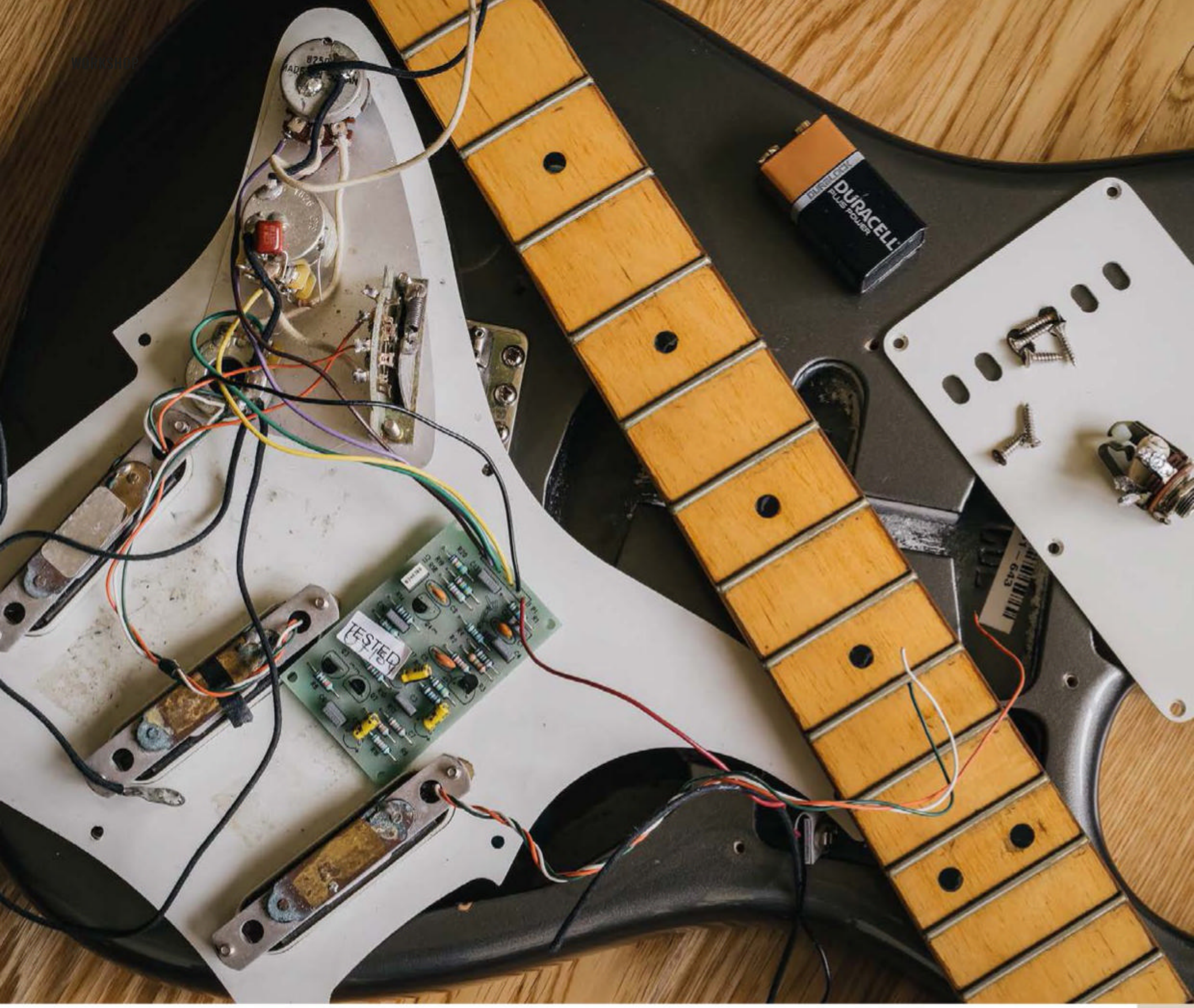
FIND OUT MORE AT HERITAGEGUITARS.COM/CUSTOM-SHOP

DIY WORKSHOP

REBUILDING CHRIS BUCK'S ERIC CLAPTON STRAT

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY HUW PRICE

This Stratocaster arrived in kit form with no guarantee that its electronics are working. There's only one way to find out...



Like all the best Clapton Strats, going all the way back to 1970, the instrument on our workbench is a collection of disparate parts. It has been in bits for the past few years and was pretty wrecked when its owner, Chris Buck, bought it. It was a bargain because it came with a non-original body that looked like it had been routed "with a dessert spoon," but thankfully, this was recently replaced with a near-mint Pewter-finished Fender body found on Reverb.

The neck dates to 1993 and has extensive playwear. Unfortunately, the electronics have been playing up but, having found the body, Chris decided it was time to put this guitar back together. Or, to be specific, it was time for *me* to do it. After all, we share some history with derelict Stratocasters.

SORTING THE WRECKAGE

Besides the soft V neck profile, Clapton signature Strats are best known for their distinctive electronics, of which there are two main components: Lace Sensor pickups and the onboard preamp/active equalisation. The volume control operates as usual but the tone control has a centre indent to mark the null point, and provides treble boost as well as treble cut depending on which way you turn it. This control acts on all three pickups. The second 'tone' knob actually controls the preamp and adds up to 25dB of midrange boost.

All Chris can tell me is that he's not sure whether the electronics are working. Besides a flat battery, I figure it could be either the pickups, the preamp or both. This project begins with some troubleshooting.

METER MADE

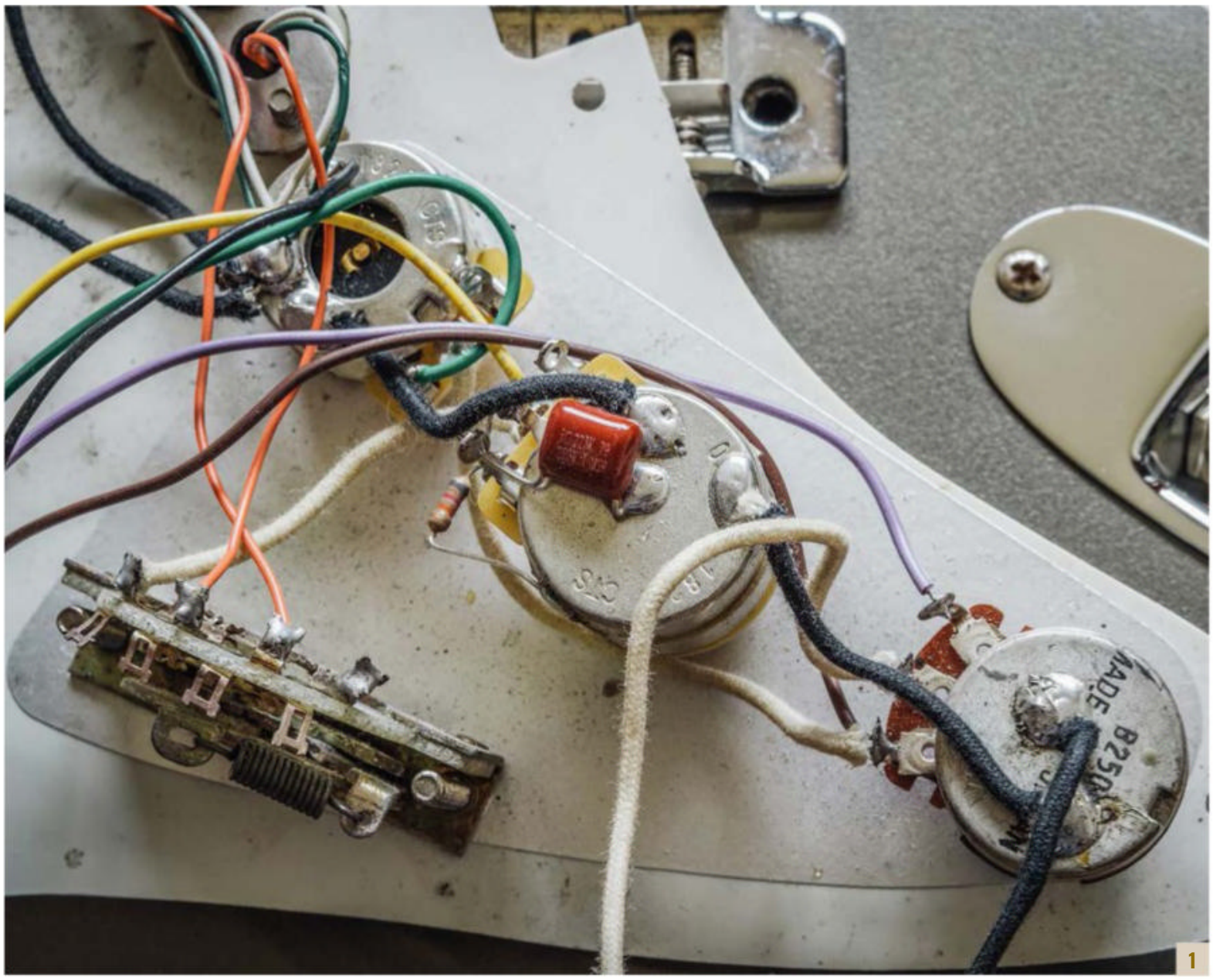
If you plan to do regular work on guitar or amp electronics, a multimeter is essential. Rather than assemble everything straight off and hope for the best, I test the pickups first. Although they look fancy, Lace Sensors are simply passive pickups with three lead-out wires. Here, the orange wires are connected to the five-way selector switch, and the white and green wires are soldered to the volume pot casing – all except the neck pickup, which isn't connected at all.

Setting my multimeter to its 20k resistance range, I get a 5.7k reading from one pickup but nothing from the other two. As fault-finding goes, it's an encouraging start, and Chris has provided a set of brand-new Lace Sensors just in case.

You shouldn't work on projects like this without referring to a circuit diagram; a Google search will usually produce the necessary results. Here, Chris is a step ahead. The diagram he provides reveals a stereo output socket with three solder tags.

Chris's pile of parts includes an unusual switching socket with four tags, but there's a new stereo socket attached to the socket cup. I decide to use the new one and temporarily solder the circuit ground, audio output and battery negative wires as shown on the schematic.

With the new Lace Sensors mounted on the pickguard and soldered in, I connect a healthy battery to the battery clip and connect the output to a guitar amp. It's all rather noisy but, when I tap the pickups, I discover that they're working. The controls all appear to be behaving as expected too.

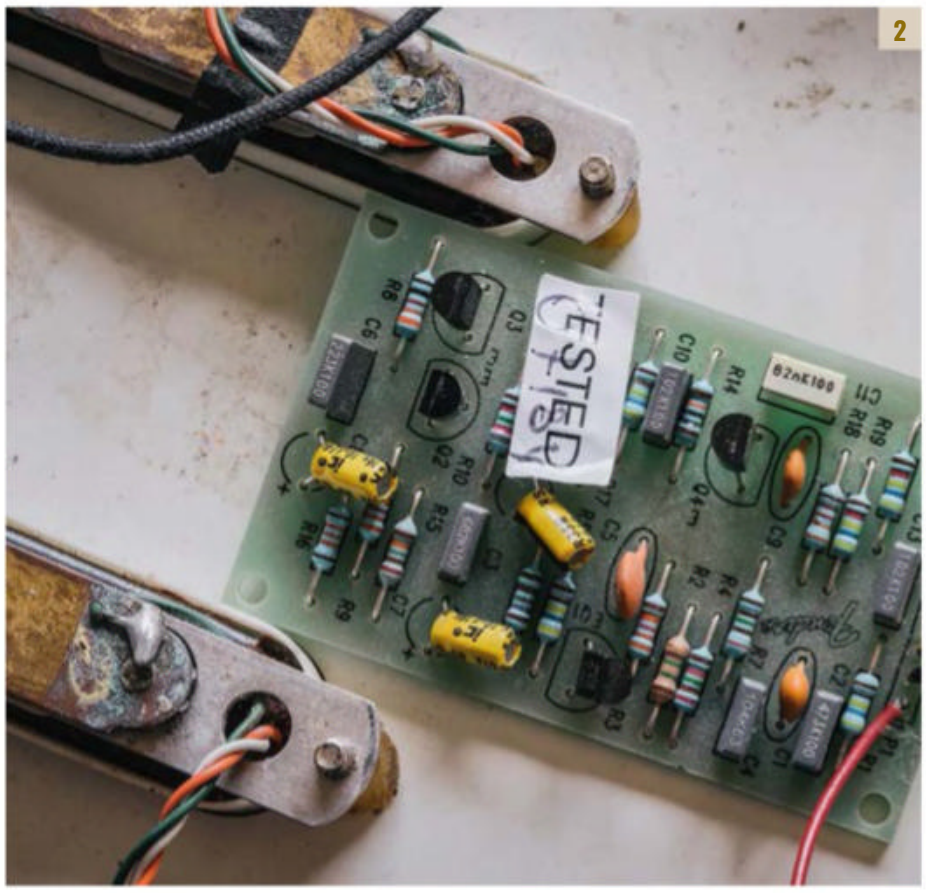


1

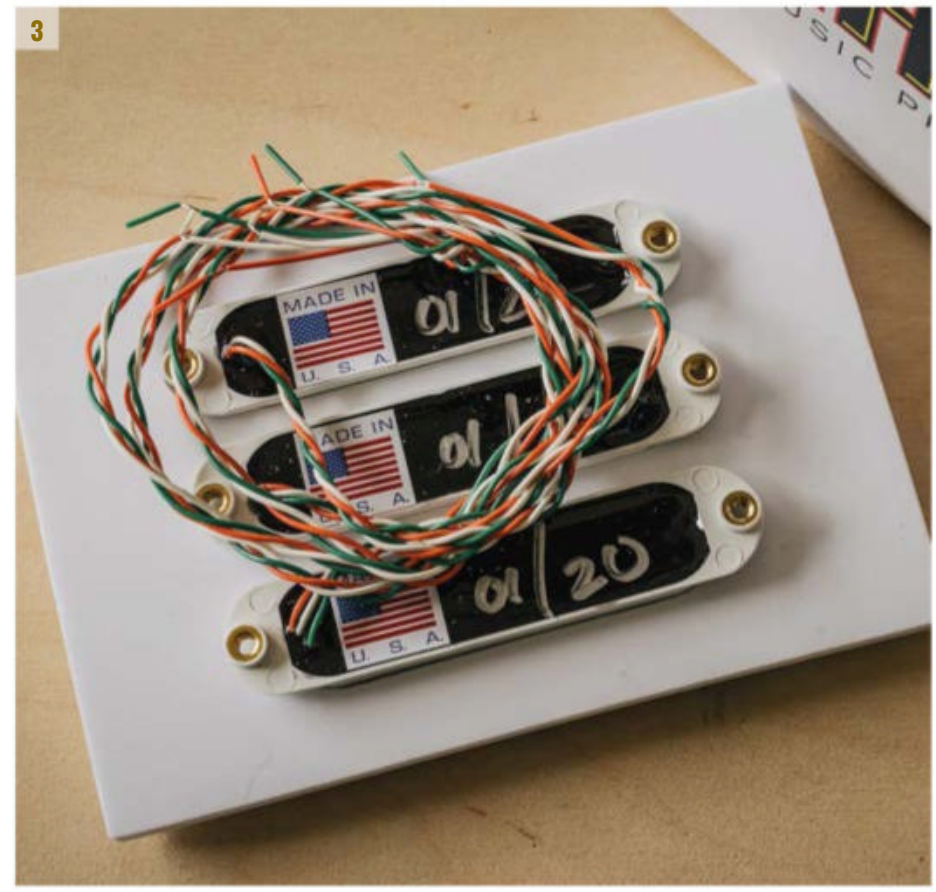
1 The potentiometers include a 50k volume control, a dual-gang tone control and a separate volume for the boost circuit

2 Clapton Strats feature a preamp circuit board with four transistors. The original Lace Sensors look corroded

3 Two of the Lace Sensors are broken, so it's time for a new set



2



3

I attribute the noise to a grounding issue and decide to press ahead with installing the electronics into the new body.

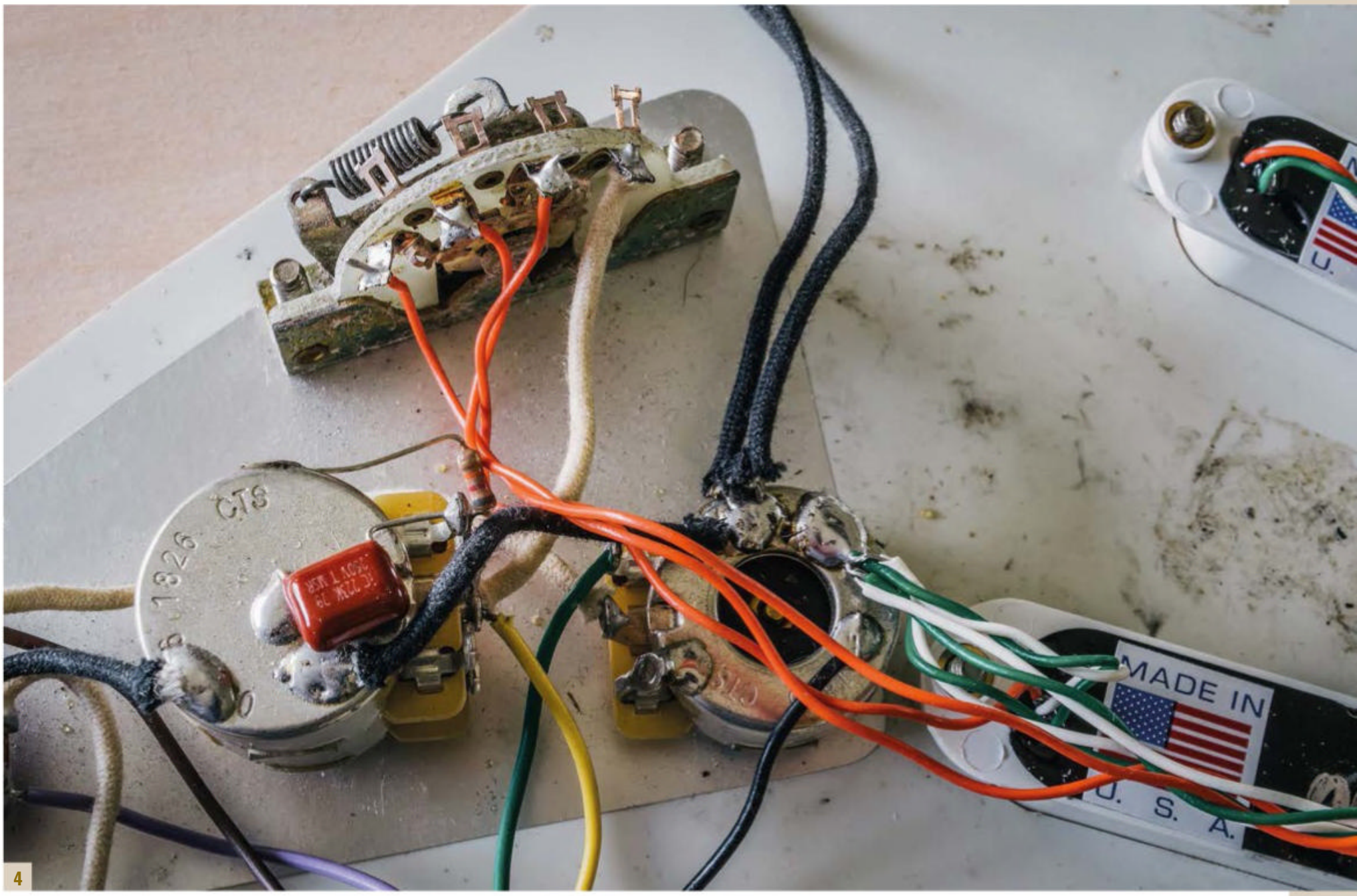
MOUNTING UP

The preamp circuit board is only attached by the solder joints that link it to the controls, so the whole assembly needs to be handled carefully. Although the board has a screw hole at each corner, Fender only used two, arranged diagonally with plastic spacers placed between the body and the board.

I find a couple of self-tapping screws that seem about the right length and diameter. Although it's fiddly to keep the spacers in position, I manage to reinstall the board in the hole routed beneath the pickup cavities.

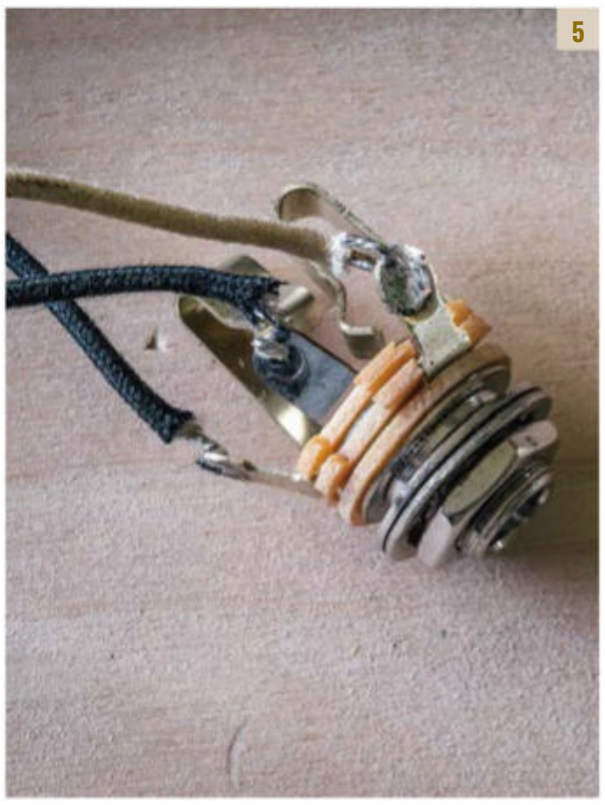
The board's lead-out wires pass through a channel into the control cavity, where there's a hole for the battery clip. The battery is mounted at the rear of the body, in a recess that's added to the side of the vibrato spring cavity. It wedges in tightly and is held in place by the cover plate.

The ground wires from the guitar's spring claw and boost control are routed through to the socket cavity, along with the signal wire and the battery's negative connection. The signal wire is soldered to the jack socket's tip tag and the ground wires go to the centre tag, which is permanently grounded. The battery negative connects to the sleeve tag, so that when a mono jack plug is inserted, the battery negative connects to ground, which then activates the preamp circuit.



4

4 The new pickups are mounted with the orange wires connected to the switch and the green and white ground wires connected to the volume pot



5

5 The ground, signal and battery-negative wires are temporarily soldered to a new output socket to test the circuit

6

6 The circuit board is secured with two corner screws and the body ground connection is located just above the coloured wires

Finally, there's a small indent to the side of the control cavity, with a screw used for another ground wire that has a metal connector soldered onto the end. Presumably there's conductive paint lining the cavities, and this is adding a further level of noise shielding. It certainly seems to work, because when I perform a final check before fixing everything down, the only noise I can hear is coming from the amplifier. The Clapton Strat itself is now completely noiseless.

TO THE EDGE

Inspecting the neck closely, I notice that it has been refretted and that the fret ends are protruding from the board along with several hard Super Glue bumps. After giving the neck a good clean with naphtha, I use my fret-bevelling tools to smooth the fret ends and then tidy the bevels on both sides.

I round the bevels over with a needle file and polish out any scratches with wet and dry paper, followed by 4,000-grit Micro-Mesh. The Micro-Mesh also restores the frets to a nice shine. Normally I would protect the finish with masking tape but the lacquer that Fender used during the early 1990s can be brittle and pull away when protective tape is removed.

With the neck looking and feeling a lot better, Chris's guitar gets a fresh set of stings and a setup. It might benefit from some fret levelling in the future but, for now, it's good to go. G

For more on Huw's work, visit huwpriceguitar.com

7

7 The battery wedges into this recess adjacent to the vibrato springs, and the plastic cover holds it in place

8 Fret-bevelling tools with diamond files can smooth and tidy up the fret ends

8

AMPLIFIER FAQ

What is a choke and what role does it play in a guitar amplifier? Rift head honcho Chris Fantana explains…

Have a burning question about your amp or, worse still, a burning amp? Email us at editors@guitar.com

1

Hi Chris, I'm looking to put together the bits needed to build my own 50-watt amplifier and I've been told that I should use a choke in the power supply. What is that?
Brad, Darlington

Hi, Brad. Many thanks for your question – and what a great one it is! Quite simply, a choke is an inductor that sits in a high-voltage supply and whose job it is to assist in filtering out any residual hum in the power supply. They normally look like transformers but only have two leads and can be much smaller.

Not all guitar amplifiers will have a choke because not all amplifiers require one. It is entirely up to the circuit designer to decide whether a choke would be beneficial or not when weighted up against the additional cost involved.

Typically, a choke would replace a resistor that sits between the output transformer and output valve screen-grid nodes in the HV rail. The benefit of using a choke is that they regulate the current without dropping voltage, allowing for less sag in the output stage. You'll find that most amplifiers rated at 30 watts or more will have a choke in the power supply. It's easier to generate a high-powered clean audio signal if your power supply isn't struggling to cope with the demands of the player.

CHOKING ON OPTIONS

Compared to a £1 power resistor, chokes are quite expensive. In fact, they cost about 20 times that amount. Thankfully, in the grand scheme of things, that's still relatively cheap. You'll find that chokes listed for sale will sport various ratings and measurements that you'll need to take into account when selecting one. These are DC resistance, DC current, inductance, and voltage rating. You'll only need to focus on three of those: DC resistance, current and inductance.

2

1 DC RESISTANCE

While the perfect choke will have zero resistance, you'll usually find them with a reading of 100-200 ohms. The lower the DCR, the smaller the voltage drop and the better regulation. Don't worry about this too much, though – choke design has come a long way since the 1960s and the difference between a 105-ohm choke and a 180-ohm version is minimal for guitar use.

2 DC CURRENT

This tells you how much current can be drawn through the choke. You'll need to calculate the combined requirement for the preamp section plus the output-valve screen grids.

3 INDUCTANCE

A choke is an inductor, remember? That means it has to have an inductance rating! Inductance is measured in Henries (H) and, as a rule of thumb, a higher number equals more filtering. Guitar amplifier chokes are usually available in the 5-20H range and I can't think of a situation where a higher inductance would be required.

CHOKE HOLD

Let's look at the choke specifications commonly used by the three big amplifier companies:

Marshall: 5 Henries, 120mA, 115-ohm DCR
Fender: 4 Henries, 90mA, 105-ohm DCR
Vox: 19 Henries, 100mA, 500-ohm DCR

You'll see that Fender and Marshall use very similar specifications for their chokes, while Vox opts for both higher inductance and DCR values in the AC30.

I once tried swapping a Marshall choke with a Fender in a Super Lead build and found no obvious tonal change. I expect that the specification selected by each was simply the closest available from their suppliers. The Vox choke stands out. Vox choose to filter the entire HV supply, rather than just part of it, as Marshall and Fender do. The inductance is higher because it needs to filter more, got it?

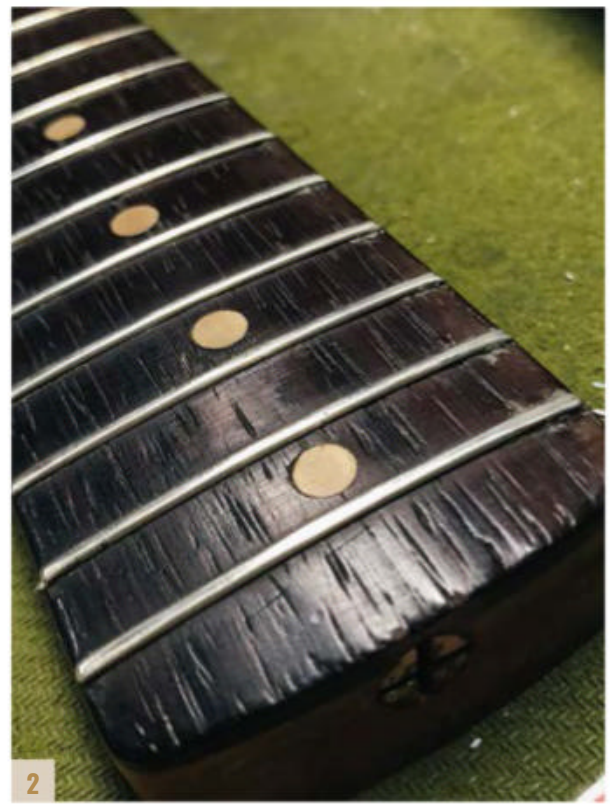
If you're building a Fender or Marshall clone, which I suspect you are, then simply go for the appropriate spec and get building!

Visit riftamps.com for more

1 Chokes are usually smaller than transformers, as you can seen here, next to this Mesa/ Boogie's enormous power transformer

2 Sitting in the power supply, a choke can be used to help smooth and filter the DC high voltage

1


2

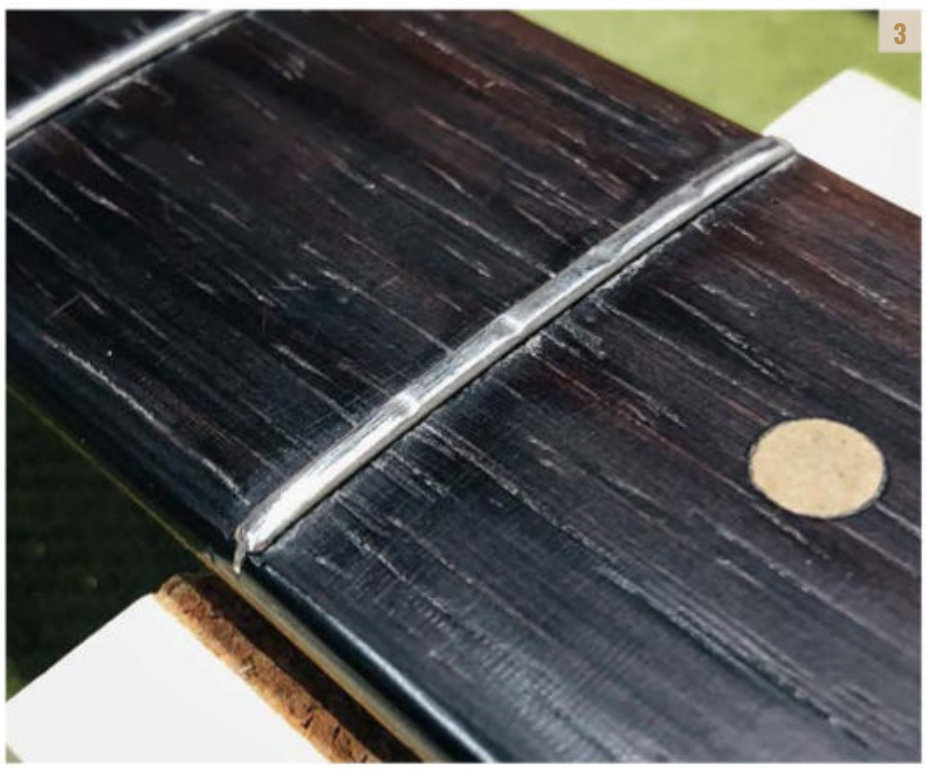
OPPOSITE Two Jazzmasters, one very old (1961) and the other pretending to be (2007)

1 Where does he get all these toys? StewMac.com

2 Some very poor fretwork. Look at those globs of glue! There's evidence of sloppy fret removal here too

3 There is extreme playwear on these frets. They're almost ground down to nothing

4 All that's required is a little moisture and a soldering iron to heat the frets and they come out of their slots easily


3

4

TECH TALK

SELF-CARE AND FRETWORK

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY MICHAEL JAMES ADAMS

In the latest instalment of his column, Mike ruminates on how to address fretwork issues without falling too far down the rabbit hole of perfectionism

I'm not ashamed to admit that it's been six whole years since my last serious fretwork. It's not that I don't enjoy it, it's just that I didn't really want to do it after we moved to California all those years ago.

For one, the cost of entry to a set of good fretting tools is about the price of a new American Fender guitar, and I just didn't feel like spending the money. Secondly, working from home meant repairs often piled up in our living room, and fretting supplies just meant more space taken up and more dust and debris stubbornly floating around our apartment. Thirdly, I was worn out from years of hustling as a tech and I needed a break from it all. That's self-care, baby!

Once I started taking on repair jobs again, frets were still something that I wanted nothing to do with. But if that's the case, what brought me back this year? To put it simply, pity.

The patient was a 1961 Jazzmaster, beautifully refinished in something between Sonic and Daphne Blue. The rest of the guitar, however, left much to be desired, particularly the fretwork. I've seen some mangled 'boards in my day but this one really hurt.

Fretwear was certainly the most noteworthy issue. The pressure of play had left deep indentations from the root position all the way up to the 9th. But it wasn't just the wear that was distressing. Among other issues, the fretboard had a sharp backward bow from frets one to three that couldn't be dialled out via the truss rod. To correct this, a luthier had levelled the frets themselves rather than the 'board, grinding down a drastic amount of the third and second frets so that those positions would actually play, which had left them almost flat.

The fretboard had a compound radius but not in the way you might reasonably expect: at the first fret, the vintage correct 7.25-inch radius; from frets two to 10, 9.5 inches; and at fret 11, the fretboard lazily curved back to 7.25 inches. This was utter madness. Unfortunately, so much wood had already been removed from the fretboard that I didn't think it at all wise to reshape it back to the proper vintage radius, so when it came time to plane it, I opted for 9.5 inches.

5 With the fretboard planed to a 9.5" radius, it's almost ready for fretwire

6 The levelling takes a while but so does anything worth doing right

7 Admiring my work in the sunlight

8 The frets are looking quite shiny

9 Test-fitting an E string just to see how it plays. Even with only one string installed, it plays very cleanly

10 Joe Riggio came through with these beautiful dot inlays

My heart went out to this ornery little offset and, like the Michael Corleone of guitar repair, I was pulled back into the world of refrets. I soon made a hefty order with StewMac and planned out my work. Here are some things that helped me as I jumped back into fretwork. I hope they will help those of you approaching the job for first time too.

THINK IT THROUGH

I'm glad that it took a while for my tools to arrive because that waiting period afforded me the time to think through each of the procedures I was to perform. I'm a big fan of making notes for planning purposes and having the chance to mull over every step of the process – the techniques, the measurements, things to watch out for, problems that may arise – is crucial to the success of any good repair job.

PRACTISE

When my tools finally arrived, I took each out of the box and spent time getting familiar with it, feeling its weight in my hands. Then I brought the tools into the workshop, took out a spare Duo-Sonic neck I had lying around, and tried them out. I felt the way my aluminium sanding beams pressed down on the neck with each pass, tapped my dead blow fretting hammer to the workbench to appreciate the balance, and discovered the joy of the Z-file and how easily it crowns the fretwire.

WORK DELIBERATELY

There's no such thing as too level. When your aim is to make a guitar play cleanly and effortlessly, you can't be too careful in levelling those frets. Be vigilant in finding areas that aren't quite getting the benefit of whatever implement you're using, be it a file or a full-width beam. Constantly check your work with a Sharpie on the tops of the frets with a fret-level gauge like the Rocker, which tells you when a fret is too high, and do not be afraid to take a little longer than expected if things just aren't right.

LET THE TOOLS DO THE WORK

When I really got down to it, I was rather shocked by how much easier fretwork is than I remembered. "Either I got better or the tools did," I joked to my wife and, honestly, it has to be the tools.

I can remember a few jobs in the past on which I've managed to completely wear myself out during the crowning phase, all thanks to inferior tools. This time though, I relaxed my arm and let the file do the work for me – and you know what? This was perhaps the best experience that I've ever had with a crowning file.

The file made quick work of each freshly levelled fret and all without having to press down on the thing. I was able to complete all 21 frets in record time. That's the difference a good-quality tool can make. And not only was it the filing, almost every aspect of the job went this way.

TAKE BREAKS

Even with the ease afforded by decent tools, taking breaks is still important for the sake of both mind and body. This is still tedious work, with lots of repetitive motions and tasks that start to run together if you try to do them all at once – and this goes double for first-timers. Set little goals for yourself (radius the fretboard, finish the fret ends) and take a break when you complete them. Trust me, it helps.

ADAPT

As with any repair job, there will always be problems. It's important to recognise and accept this fact so that you can move on and address the inevitable issues head-on.

11

12

11 Time for more polishing

12 All strung up and ready to go. This one came out great

13 I was just about ready to let this one go but then I decided it needed a new nut

14 I prefer the look of unbleached bone – you never know what the finished product is going to look like. This one has some nice mottling

13

14

I already had the faint impression that I may have to replace a few inlays on this fretboard, what with the amount of wood already taken off by the previous work. But I couldn't know for certain until I crossed that proverbial bridge and, wouldn't you know it, there were two inlays that did not survive the levelling process.

Luckily, my friend and renowned refinish expert Joe Riggio set me up with a perfect set of his own 'clay' dot inlays. After glueing them in, the match was so good that I didn't even feel the need to stain them. From a few feet away, you can barely tell which ones are the replacements.

DON'T LET PERFECT BE THE ENEMY OF GOOD

It's easy with a job like this to get a little lost in the details, to overdo a task, to exert too much of your energy while shooting for perfection. I have to admit that this definitely happened to me towards the end of this job.

After a lifetime dealing with hyper-focus issues and the inability to move on from something that felt unfinished, I was formally diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder in 2004. For the most part, understanding my conditions helped me manage and eventually harness them to work for me. Still, I have rough days here and there.

Fretwork can be especially difficult for me because I tend to home in on the absolute tiniest details that almost every other person in the world would simply live with. I'm not talking about the usual stuff, like a bad level or tool marks on the fretboard, I'm talking about not liking the shape of the tip of that tang and this fret end not being quite as perfectly rounded as the other twenty – things that really don't matter, because absolutely no-one will ever see them.

This is the reason I don't like to work on my own guitars: I will always see every microscopic problem and it will quickly spiral out of control for me. With this job, it was making the frets extra shiny.

I had already levelled, crowned, and polished them and, thinking back, they all looked great. But were they perfect? My brain chemistry told me no.

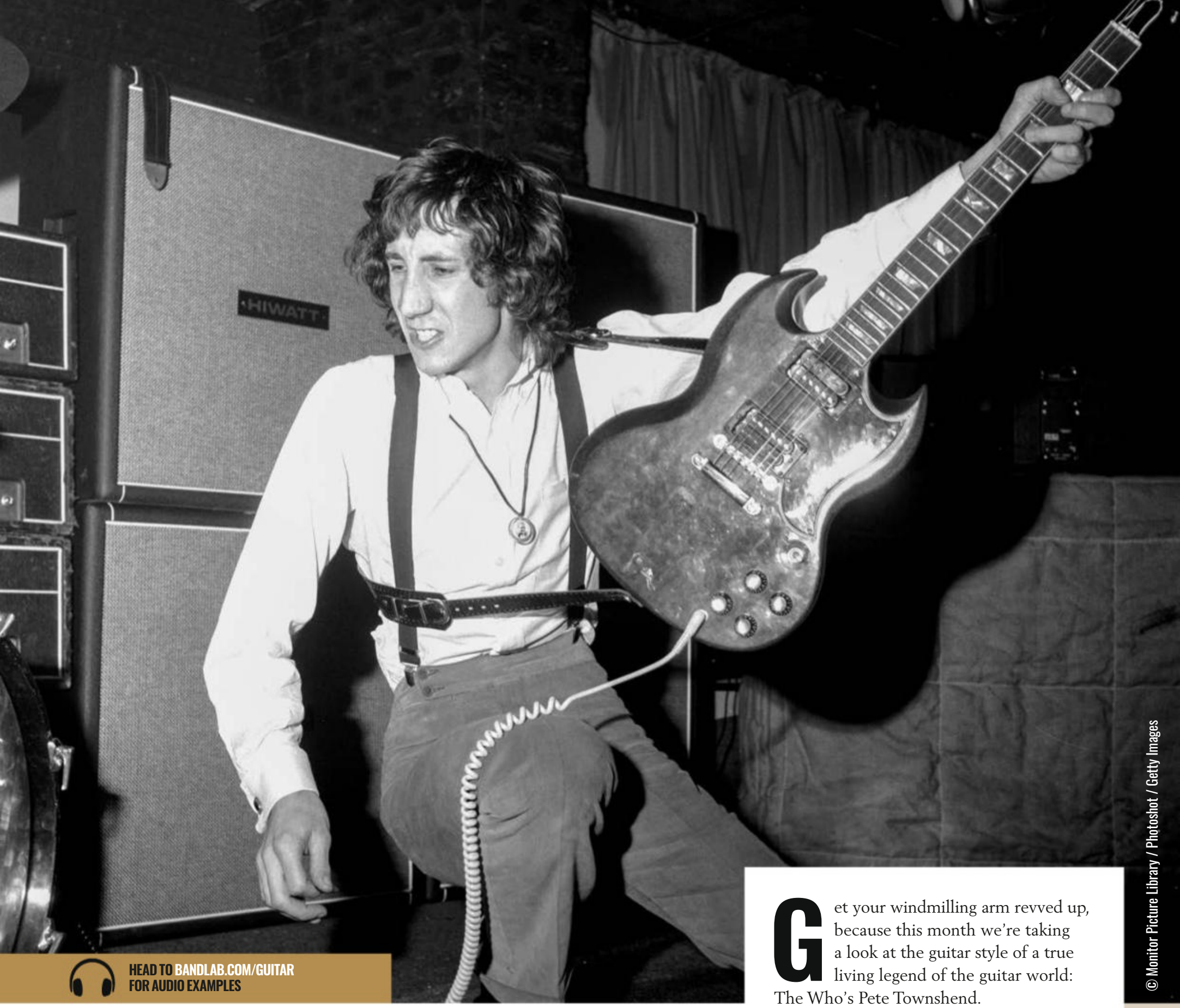
I could feel the urge to fixate rising up within me but, thankfully, I had the presence of mind to reach out to my friend Mike Baranik. Mike is one of my favourite builders in the world and his work is stellar. Perfect, even.

I sent a message to Mike asking for advice and he wrote back immediately, telling me that he'd been through similar things with fret polishing and came to realise that a mirror-shine looks nice but it isn't the most important thing.

"It's all about how they play," he told me. He admitted that he often felt the same way. That was all it took to end my spiral and bring me back to a healthier view of my work. I took a break, had a snack and came back to the neck feeling good.

I'm sitting here now with the reassembled guitar in my lap, amazed at how beautifully it plays. I won't lie: I am exceedingly proud of this one. In a few days' time, the owner is going to come and collect it, and I know he'll be just as happy as I am, if not more so. And really, *that's* the most important thing.

Follow Mike on Instagram @puisheen



© Monitor Picture Library / Photoshot / Getty Images

HEAD TO BANDLAB.COM/GUITAR FOR AUDIO EXAMPLES

FIVE MINUTES TO...

PETE TOWNSHEND

WORDS LEIGH FUGE

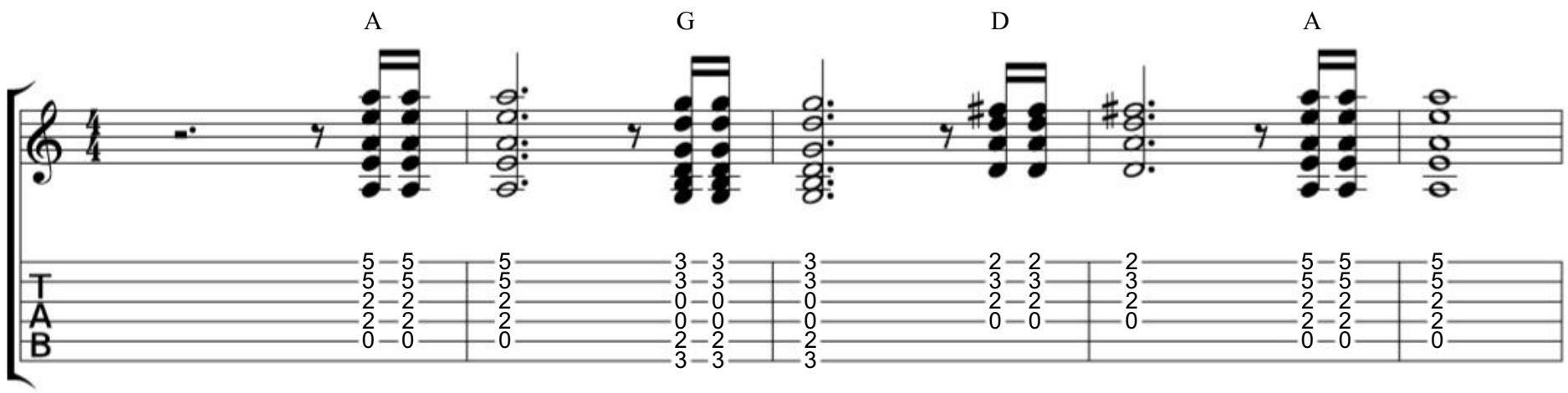
The Who's guitar icon is one of the most influential and important players ever, with rhythm chops that have stood the test of time

Get your windmilling arm revved up, because this month we're taking a look at the guitar style of a true living legend of the guitar world: The Who's Pete Townshend.

Townshend is undoubtedly more famous for his onstage gear-destroying antics than any lead part he ever played. But his genius has always been his driving rhythm style, which laid the bedrock for almost everything that came after it in terms of rock 'n' roll guitar and especially punk. So turn up your stack as loud as it'll go – and don't forget to hit those strings hard!

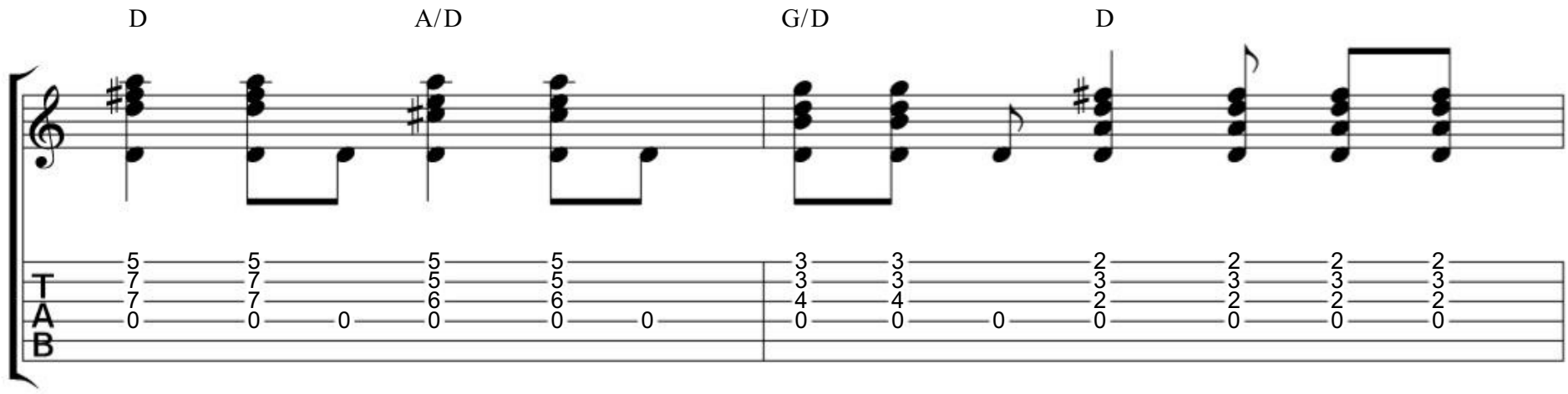
IMPACT CHORDS

This is a simple trick you can put into your rhythm playing to channel some Townshend vibes. If you're going to be hitting a chord on the first beat of the bar, set it up by quickly strumming a pair of 16th notes at the end of the previous bar. Count this as "& a 1".



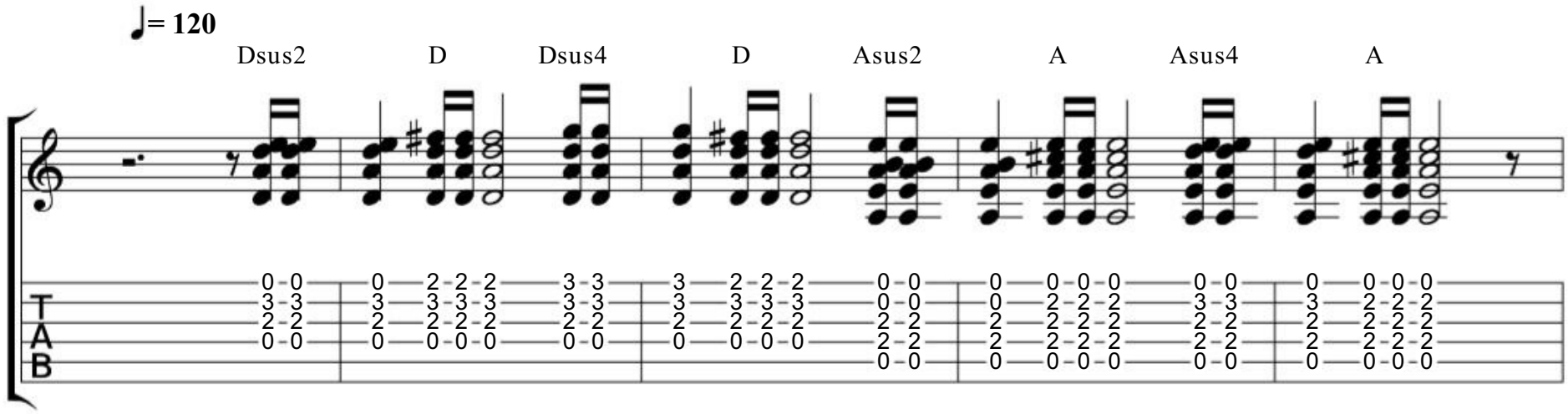
CHORD INVERSIONS AND DRONES

A classic rhythmic trick from many Who tracks is Townshend's use of chord inversions and a droning note to create melodic rhythmic movement. This example uses inversions of D, A and G chords.



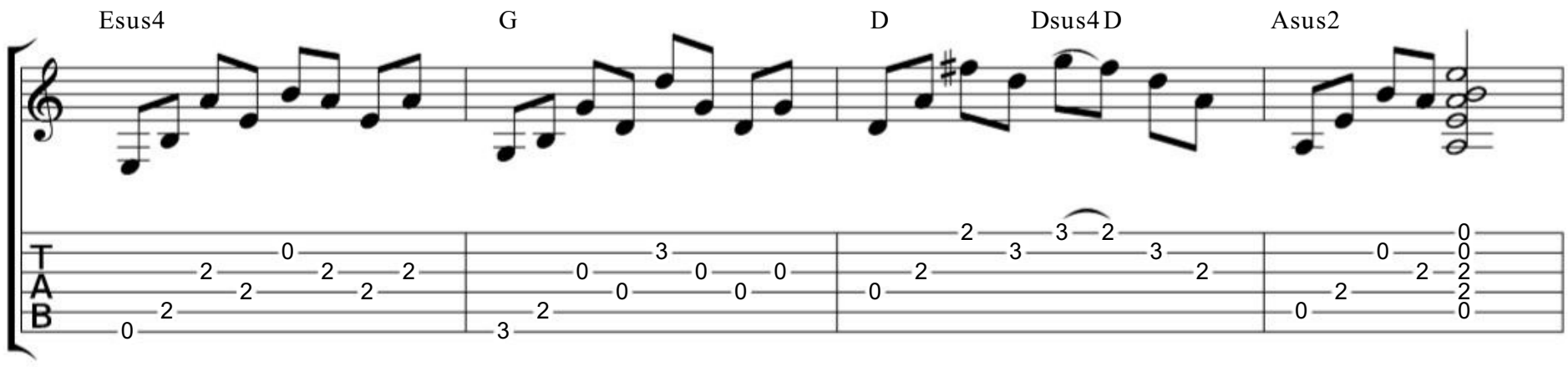
SUSPENDED CHORDS

This is another melodic chord movement that uses sus2 and sus4 chords. Rhythmically, this shares some similarities with the first example but there are some additional hits in the bar here.



SUSPENDED PICKING

The Who were once officially recognised as the loudest band on earth but their repertoire wasn't all about aggression. In some of the softer moments, Townshend would lean on his favourite suspended chords to provide interesting textures. This example uses an Esus4, Dsus4 and Asus2.



Leigh Fuge is a guitar teacher and professional musician from Swansea in the UK. He has taught hundreds of students face-to-face and via the MGR Music platform. He has more than 10 years' experience of working in the industry as a touring musician, session guitarist and teacher. To find guitar tutors in your area, visit mgrmusic.com

CHORD CLINIC

E MINOR

WORDS ROD FOGG

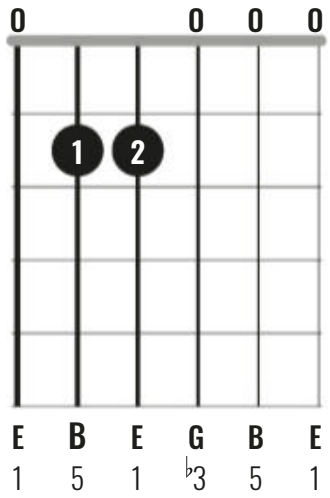
In our new-look Chord Clinic column, we explore the interesting variations on classic chords that can add variety and interest to your playing and songwriting

E minor is one of the easiest chords you can play on the guitar. It only requires two fingers and, being the lowest-pitch minor chord you can play in standard tuning, has considerable heft. Like all minor chords it needs just three notes, the root, third and fifth, which are E, G and B.

The note G is three frets higher than E, making Em a minor third and giving the chord its minor flavour. For comparison, G♯ is the major third and would make a major chord if added to E and B.

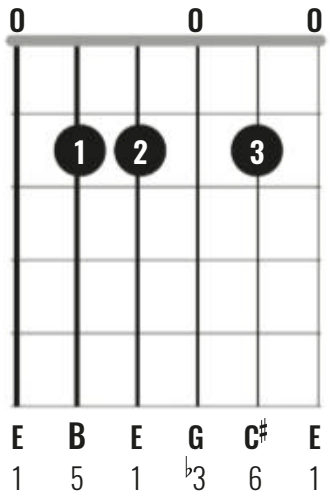
E minor is the opening chord of Neil Young's moody song *Separate Ways*, and we like the subtle tremolo on E minor in The Ventures' version of *Pipeline*. You can also hear Gabrielle Aplin give this chord a workout at the start of her 2013 track *Keep On Walking*. Enjoy playing these examples and we'll be back next month with more chordal goodness.

Em



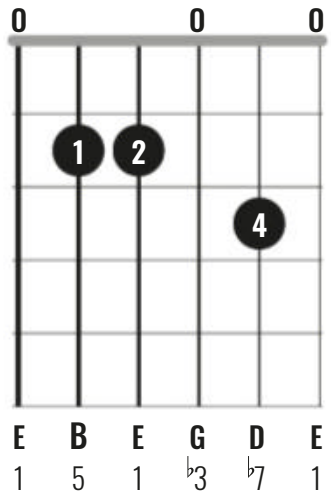
Chords like this are known as open-string chords, as they contain a mix of open strings and fretted notes. In this open-string version of E minor, some notes are repeated – B occurs twice and E three times.

Em6



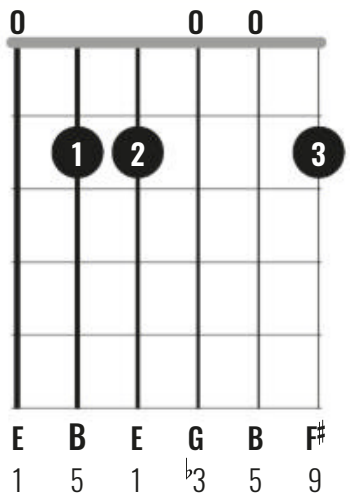
Two-finger chords give you the spare fingers with which to add other interesting notes to proceedings. Here, we've added C♯, the major sixth, to create an edgy-sounding E minor sixth chord.

Em7



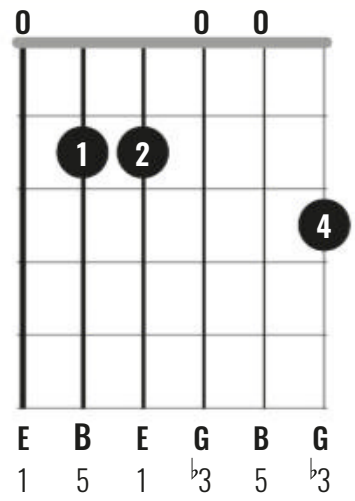
Adding the note D to the basic chord will give you an E minor 7. Try combining this with the previous examples to add movement to your progression while remaining broadly in E minor.

Em^{add9}



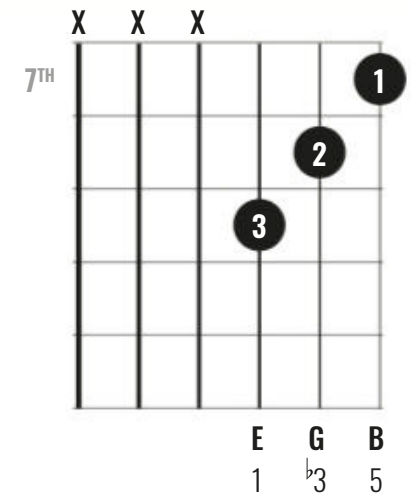
The added note trick works well on the top string too. Here we have added F♯, which is the ninth note of the E minor scale and gives us a chord of E minor add nine. Listen to Paul Weller's *You Do Something To Me* for inspiration on how to incorporate this chord into your playing.

Em



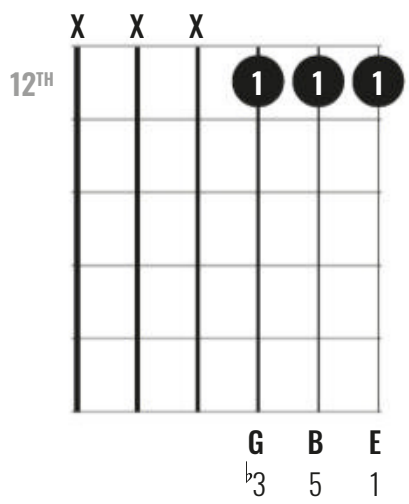
Here we've added the note G on the top string, which works especially well when combined with the previous chord. It doesn't change the name of the chord, as G is in the chord already – it's just another voicing of E minor.

Em



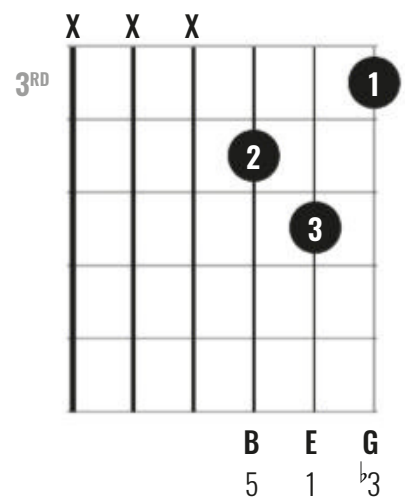
Anywhere you play the notes E, G and B together, it's an E minor chord. If E is the lowest note, then the chord is in root position. Three-note chords played higher up the neck are fantastic for choppy and funky rhythm parts.

Em/G



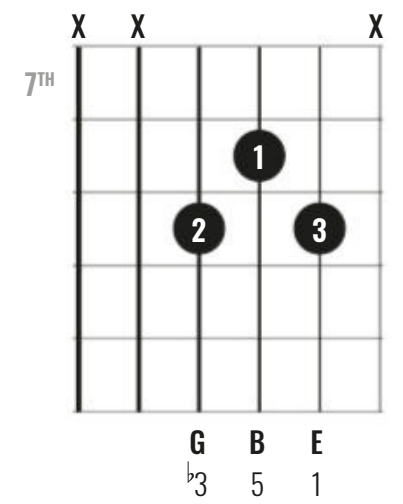
Here we have a first-inversion E minor chord, because G, which is the third, is the lowest note. Try combining it with figure 6 for some funky strumming. We use a forward slash followed by the bass note when the chord is not in root position.

Em/B



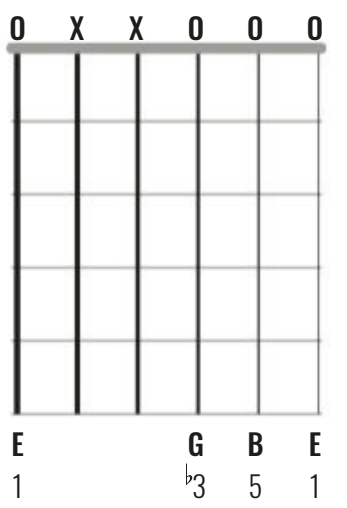
This time we have a second inversion – B, the fifth of the chord, is in the bass, so it's another slash chord. Try fingerpicking figures 6, 7 and 8 while picking the open low E string with your thumb.

Em/G



Here we have a different first-inversion shape, this time on the fourth, third and second strings. Try and work out root position and second inversions on the same three strings. You can also let the first string ring open against these inversions for added jangle.

Em



Finally (drum roll, please) the easiest chord on the guitar – but for fingerpickers only. The open strings make a root position E minor with no fret-hand fingers required. Your picking-hand thumb plays the open E bass note, and the index, middle and ring fingers take care of the top 3 strings, one finger each. Try some arpeggios and mix in C, G and D chords, and your four-chord song is on its way.

Rod Fogg is a London-based guitarist, teacher and writer. He is the author of *The Ultimate Guitar Course* (Race Point 2014), *The Electric Guitar Handbook* (Backbeat, 2009) and contributed to bestseller *The Totally Interactive Guitar Bible* (Jawbone Publishing, 2006). Find out more at rodfogg.com

TALKBOX

MATT BERRY

INTERVIEW SAM ROBERTS

Star of *The IT Crowd, The Mighty Boosh, Toast Of London* and more, Matt Berry is also a musician and writer. He tells us about his first guitar, his top pedal and why he'd put someone else's name on his signature model

The moment it all started...

"Hearing the album *Tubular Bells* by Mike Oldfield. Even as a 14 year old, I appreciated the dynamics he achieved with his guitar on that album. He created such an atmospheric foreground, middle and background sonically, which I still get off on to this day."

I couldn't live without my...

"Boss Blues Driver. It's a boring and frequent answer I'm sure but I reckon they struck gold with that pedal. I believe, in some way, it helps every one of my guitars. The second would be an Orange Tiny Terror for sure."

The one that got away...

"The first guitar my parents bought for me was an aqua-blue Strat-style Kawaii. I have no idea when it was retired in favour of my Top Twenty, another secondhand job. I wish I still had it for sentimental reasons, and to play and record the odd line."

My signature model...

"I'd be too embarrassed for my actual name to be on it, as that may imply that I reckon I'm a serious deal. I'd like a 1974 Sunburst Les Paul with a black scratchplate under the name Derek Halloween."

The first thing I play when I pick up a guitar...

"Just a D. I know a lot of players strum the Em but I've always been a D man, myself."

The best advice I've ever been given...

"The less notes you play, the more will come out of the speaker."

My Spinal Tap moment...

"Lots. When recording at my home studio, I'll experiment a bit. This might include opening the stereo overhead mics and then running to stand with the acoustic at four corners of the room, playing and recording the same thing. As I approach the third corner, I realise how Tap this looks, and how Tap I'm being."

I wish I was there...

"There are too many but today I'd like to go and see The Doors at the Whisky a Go Go in LA in the late 1960s, the night they were signed."

The first thing on my rider...

"A new car."

If I could just play one thing...

"Certain acoustic claw combinations. I might be able to get it a couple of times but the tricky ones I have trouble sustaining."

Matt Berry's new album *The Blue Elephant* is out 14 May on Acid Jazz Records

ERNIE BALL
POWER SLINKY
2220
MADE IN USA
BEEFY
PRIMO SLINKY
EXTRA
SUPER SLINKY
2223
MADE IN USA
SKINNY TOP HEAVY BOTTOM
2215
MAMMOTH SLINKY
2214
MADE IN USA
MEGA SLINKY
2213
MADE IN USA
ULTRA SLINKY
10
13
17
28
38
48
CUSTOM GAUGE NICKEL WOUND GUITAR STRINGS
2227
MADE IN USA

#FORTHEWAYYOUPLAYTODAY
www.blackstaramps.com/ranges/idcore

Designed & Engineered
by Blackstar Amplification UK

Blackstar®
AMPLIFICATION
the sound in your head

Find your nearest dealer at
www.blackstaramps.com